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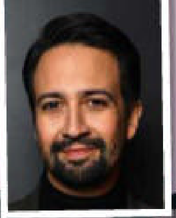

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A man for all seasons
NICKY SPENCE
The versatile tenor on Schubert, Samson – and why anyone can sing

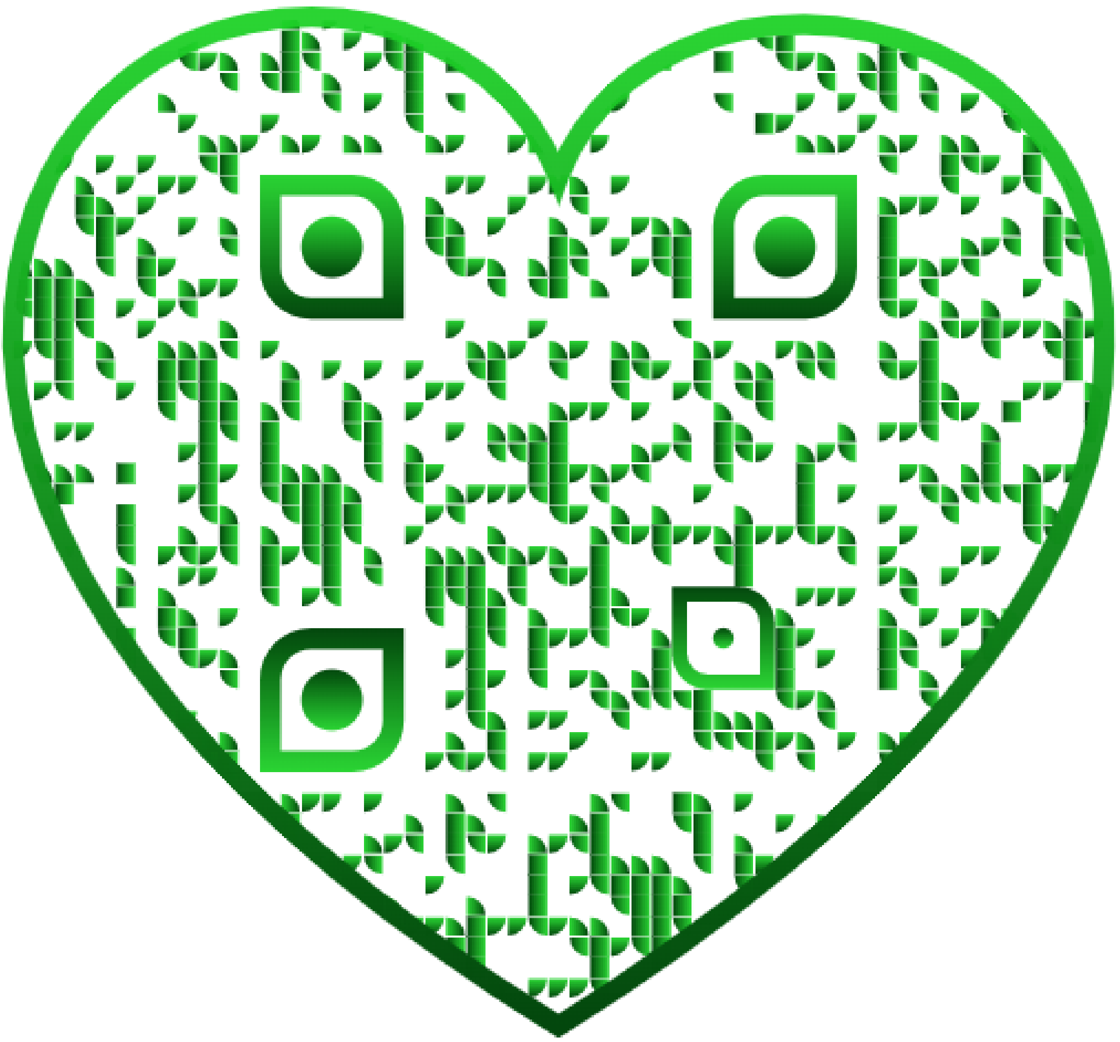
Richard Strauss
The lesser-known operas that you ought to hear

Train tracks
How the railways took music in new directions

Annelien Van Wauwe
Limber up with the yoga-loving clarinettist

BBC RADIO 3
Full March listings inside
See p100

100 reviews by the world's finest critics
Recordings & books – see p68



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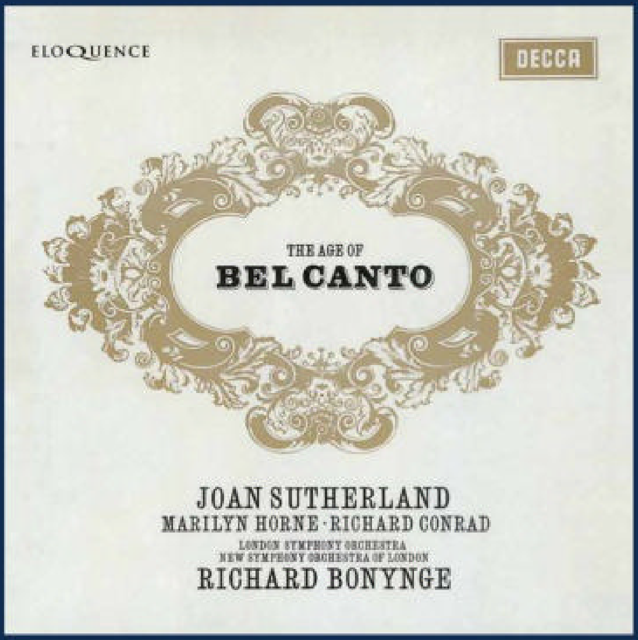

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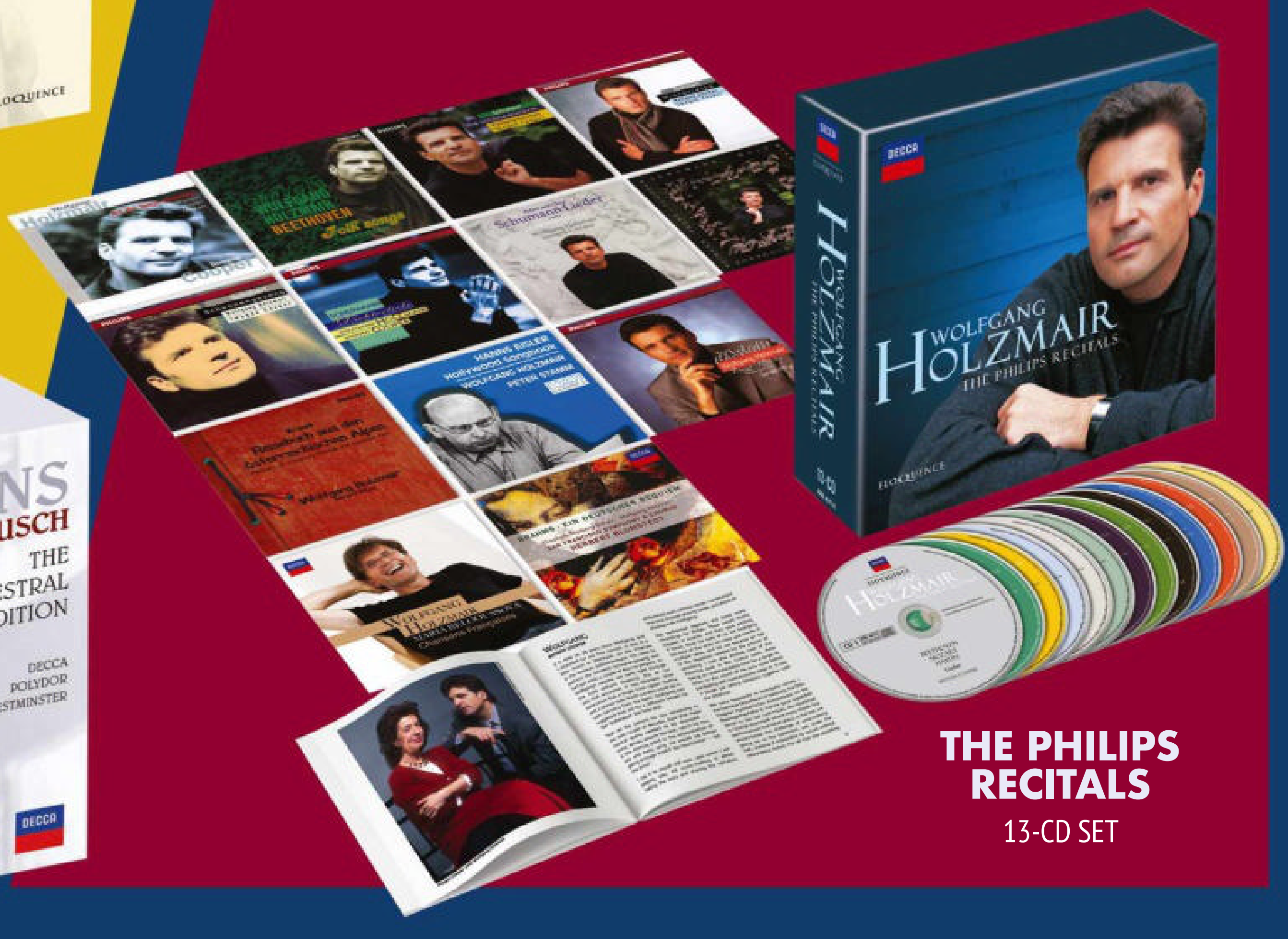

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Welcome

If I had to sum up Nicky Spence in one word, it would surely be 'versatile'. In the last year the ebullient Scottish tenor has taken on roles as demanding as Siegmund in *The Valkyrie* and Laca in *Jenůfa* – and will shortly be seen on the Royal Opera House stage as Saint-Saëns's Samson. But such core classical roles only tell half the story, as Spence began his career as a crossover star after being offered the 'golden ticket' of a five-album million-pound recording contract while still an impoverished student at London's Guildhall.

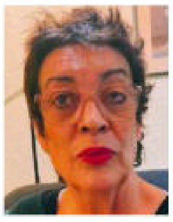
Two albums in and he realised such a life wasn't for him. His subsequent bold decision to return to his studies has paid off in spades, as he's now emerged as the tenor of choice for a wide range of projects. Still, his sense of showmanship hasn't deserted him, as his forthcoming involvement in a new operatic talent show demonstrates – and as those lucky enough to be vaccinated by him during the pandemic can attest (see p26).

Elsewhere in this issue, we discover the benefits of yoga from clarinettist Annelien Van Wauwe (p34), take a trip on the railways with composers inspired by train travel (p38) and learn of the harrowing experiences of musicians during the Troubles in Belfast (p48). I couldn't ask for a more interesting and varied first issue as editor of *BBC Music Magazine*, as I hope you'll agree!

Charlotte Smith *Editor*

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS

Richard Morrison
Chief culture writer, The Times
'Interviewing Nicky Spence is fun because he is the Oscar Wilde of tenors: never short of a witty quip. But the likeable Scot also has plenty of serious things to say about his career choices, both good and bad.' ***Page 26***



Julia Winterson
Music lecturer and author
'Writing about railways and music meant combining two of my favourite subjects. My interest in trains stems from childhood holidays at Pool-in-Wharfedale station, where my grandfather was the station master.' ***Page 38***

Clare Stevens
Writer and editor
'Classical music was the soundtrack to my teenage years in 1970s Belfast; participation was often difficult, but some inspirational experiences and visits from famous performers nurtured my enthusiasm.' ***Page 48***

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ADVERTISING
Advertising sales director
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Business development manager
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The Conquering Hero

'A masterclass in how to engage with the most powerful creative personality music has known. This is a true musical team.'

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PRODUCTION
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LETTER of the MONTH

Masterful: Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, c1965

GETTY

Double delight

I have had the good fortune and privilege to hear both Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau and Benjamin Appl (see *BBC Music Magazine Interview*, January) perform Schubert's *Winterreise* – the former with Daniel Barenboim at the Southbank, 1969; the latter with James Baillieu in Kendal, 2017. Due to where I was living, I heard Fischer-Dieskau five times, beginning with national service in West Berlin in 1955/1956, when I saw him as Posa in Verdi's *Don Carlos* (apparently his first major role in opera a few years earlier) and the Count in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* (both sung in German). Then we were living in Coventry in 1962 and were at the premiere of Britten's *War Requiem*, a noteworthy occasion. When we moved near London, we heard Fischer-Dieskau in two recitals during Barenboim's Summer Music on the South Bank, including the above performance. We retired to live in the Lake District, and Benjamin Appl was in Kendal for Lake District Summer Music twice, in 2015 and 2017. All of these performances can be recalled as among the finest I was lucky enough to hear during nearly 70 years of concert-going.
***Roger Belbin**, via email*

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Bardly mistaken

I thoroughly enjoyed Claire Jackson's piece about the musical scene in Stratford-upon-Avon (*Destinations*, February) and she is quite right that the Royal Shakespeare Company has 'an illustrious history as a commissioner of new scores'. But the example she gave – its commissioning of Vaughan Williams to compose music for a production of *Richard II* – is incorrect.

Vaughan Williams's music for that play was commissioned by the BBC in 1944 for a planned radio production that never happened. I am sure that the RSC would have loved to commission music from RVW but he died in 1958, three years before it was founded! He did create scores for three productions at Stratford: for *As You Like It* in 1912 (credited as the 'arranger' of the music), *Richard III* in 1913, and *Cymbeline* in 1946.

As Jackson says, some of the RSC's recently commissioned music has been recorded alongside a selection of speeches and scenes from productions and issued on CD. What most intrigues me, though, is that the CDs also include some of the music from much earlier productions at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre. The 2018 *Troilus and Cressida* that she mentions also has music from a 1960 production composed by Humphrey Searle while the 2017 *Coriolanus* has music from a 1926 production written by Rosabel Watson, a forgotten female composer. I can understand Jackson's confusion: the CD of speeches from its 2013 *Richard II* has some of RVW's music as its bonus extra and is unhelpfully misdescribed as being from a 1913 production of the play by the RSC. So even the RSC gets its own history wrong!
***Peter Holland**, Cambridge*

Where are the words?

I agree with Christopher Cook (February, *Choral and Song* reviews) that Elīna Garanča's Wagner and Mahler recording with Christian Thielemann from the 2021 Salzburg Festival is indeed excellent. But how much better would the listening experience be if we could see the lyrics on screen? The service I subscribe to is Apple Music and on their App for Samsung TVs, they are able to display the lyrics for singers such as Adele and Taylor Swift. However, classical recording artists such as Garanča and Anna Netrebko do not fare so well. We simply get a picture of the album cover. I cannot speak for other services, but it would be wonderful if this technology could be extended to classical artists. If current technology only allows one language to be displayed at a time, the default could be the principal language of the country of the subscriber's account. However,

it seems hard to believe that two languages couldn't be displayed side by side. I am sure your readers would be grateful if you could take this up with the recording industry and streaming services.
***Tony Sanderson,** Daventry*

Reclaimed sound

With reference to Claire Jackson's article on the use of recycled materials (*A sustainable sound*, January), the Edinburgh luthier Steve Burnett has for many years done this and his efforts would make an interesting feature. Earlier this year, the *Scottish Press* wrote about his use of floor boards that he found in a skip outside the house lived in by explorer Ernest Shackleton when he was secretary of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society. Burnett combined this with driftwood from the East Lothian coastline and the names of all aboard the *Endurance* are inscribed inside. He has also used sycamore from Haworth to make his Brontë violin. My own instrument made by Burnett in 2019 is from Bosnian maple for the back, spruce from the Dolomites for the belly along with willow blown down in the Millennium gales alongside the Union Canal.
***Douglas Mackenzie,** Cheshire*

Favourable finds

Jeremy Pound's Acting Editor's Letter on musical discoveries (January) struck a chord. My mother and I used to share an enthusiasm for discovering the music of unfamiliar composers off the beaten track. In the early 1970s this was very difficult, and being able to share a new name was a rare occurrence. How different it is today, thanks to the greater adventurousness of record companies (sadly, not of concert promoters) and also the existence of online communities of music lovers with similar interests. I find a new name every few days, but my mother is no longer here to share them with. My latest discovery? The Swedish Helena Munktell (1852-1919), another unjustly neglected female composer.
***Roger Musson,** Edinburgh*

The editor replies: These are, as you say, wonderful times for exploring neglected repertoire, facilitated by the scholars, musicians and record companies who put in the hard graft of bringing it to our attention. We try to highlight as much as we can in these pages, but readers' recommendations are always very welcome too!

Absent critic

Neville Cardus was not the only critic to miss an event (Letters, January). Back in the 1980s I went to a concert in the Royal Festival Hall and found myself sitting next to the celebrated music critic William Mann. Mann left at the interval but the concert review in the following day's *The Times* newspaper nevertheless included his thoughts on the symphony which had been the whole of the second half.
***Patrick Hoyte,** Minehead*

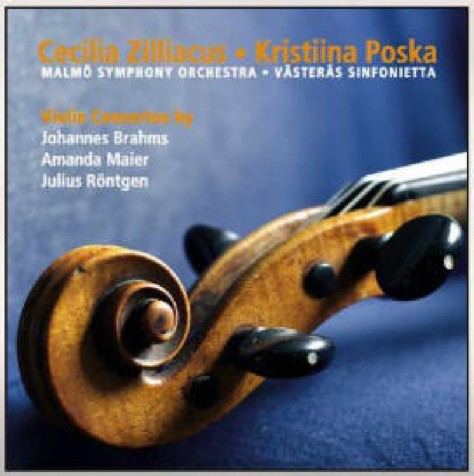
Bruckner scores

Back in the 1970s, Manchester City fans would clap the rhythm of the third movement of Beethoven's First Symphony and now they sing 'Oh, Kevin De Bruyne' to what sounds like the finale of Bruckner's Fifth. A friend says it's a tune by a popular music combo called White Stripes – they must have nicked it from Anton!
***Anthony Ingham,** Bury*

New exciting CDs!

Brahms / Maier / Röntgen (dBCD202)

Violin Concertos | Cecilia Zilliaucs / Malmö Symphony / Kristiina Poska



Cecilia Zilliacus, violin
Kristiina Poska, conductor
Malmö Symphony Orchestra
Västerås Sinfonietta

Violin Concertos by
Johannes Brahms
Amanda Maier, Julius Röntgen

New Brahms cadenza by Mats Larsson Gothe! **Release February!**

Laura Netzel | Chamber Portrait (dBCD200)

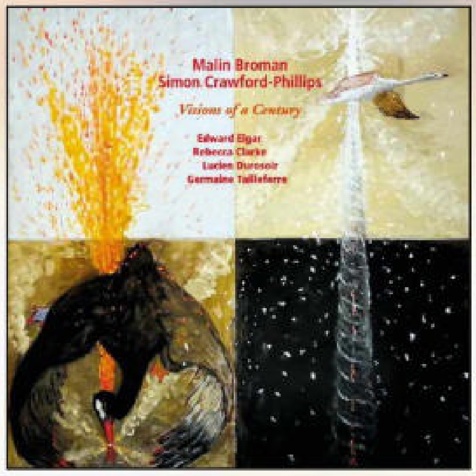
Broman, Crawford-Phillips, Bisholt / Works for Violin, Piano Pieces, Songs

"Malin Broman's effort is awesome. There's a heavy burden on pianist Simon Crawford-Phillips as well." / **Sydsvenskan**

"...genial, melodic and idiomatic music. Anyone searching for a 19th century female composer would do well to explore this" **Musicweb International**

Visions of a Century (dBCD199)

Malin Broman & Simon Crawford-Phillips: Tailleferre, Durosoir, Elgar, Clarke



"What a wonderful CD! What fantastic works! What superb musicians!" / **HiFi & Musik**

5.

"Daring and risk-taking. This couple's playing is simply one of offensive love." / **Dagens Nyheter**

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BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE

The *full* score

Our pick of the month's news, views and interviews

Chauhan and Osborne awarded New Year Honours

Recognition also accorded to musicians who coped with exceptional trials of Covid

Duly honoured: conductor Alpesh Chauhan and (right) pianist Steven Osborne have received OBEs

Conductor Alpesh Chauhan and pianist Steven Osborne are among the leading performers named in this year's New Year Honours List. Though no classical musician received a knighthood or damehood this time round, the sector did receive a spread of honours.

Chauhan and Osborne both received OBEs. The honour for Chauhan, 31, is the latest achievement in what has been a remarkable rise for the Birmingham-born maestro. As recently as 2015, when he was featured as a Rising Star in *BBC Music Magazine*, he was learning his trade as assistant conductor to Andris Nelsons at the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. He has since enjoyed success in a number of posts including, in his home patch, music director of Birmingham Opera Company, where he has earned rave reviews. Significantly, he is also a patron of Awards for Young Musicians, which supports talented young musicians from disadvantaged backgrounds.

> Chauhan's honour is the latest achievement in what has been a remarkable rise

Osborne, recently turned 50, has been on the scene a little longer. Performing regularly across the UK – he has appeared at the BBC Proms no fewer than 14 times – the Scot has also distinguished himself in the recording studio, routinely receiving five-star reviews for repertoire ranging from the subtleties of Debussy and Ravel to the ferocious demands of the Prokofiev Sonatas disc that won him the 2021 BBC Music Magazine Instrumental Award.

Other honours include an MBE for conductor Andrew Carwood, recognising his work as director of music at St Paul's Cathedral and as artistic director of the vocal ensemble Cardinall's Musick he co-founded in 1989. There is also an OBE for Mark Pemberton who, as director of the Association of British Orchestras, has recently had his work cut out negotiating the twin challenges of post-Brexit legislation and the fall-out from the Covid pandemic. Receiving the CBE, meanwhile, are Charles Alexander, Opera Rara's chair, and John Gilhooly, artistic and executive director of Wigmore Hall. With an OBE already pinned to his lapel from 2013, this will be Gilhooly's second visit to Buckingham Palace.

PATRICK ALLEN/OPERA OMNIA, BEN EALOVEGA

Innovative horn stand proves a winner for student team

Chris Griffiths, a member of the Royal Northern Sinfonia in Gateshead, is now the proud owner of a bespoke French horn stand, after a team of students from Newcastle University took home the top prize at Hackcessible, a competition that sets out to create assistive technology for disabled people. Griffiths lives with Charcot-Marie-Tooth, a condition which involves nerve damage in the hands and feet. 'I was astonished they had considered every angle,' he says. 'I can now have my hand correctly positioned in the bell and properly adjust the tone and tuning. It even allows me to rotate the horn so that I can drain it with water.'

Inspired idea: (right) Chris Griffiths tries out his horn stand, designed by Newcastle University students (above)

THE MONTH IN NUMBERS

10

… years of Glyndebourne's wind turbine (above) to be celebrated with a batch of new environmental projects at the Sussex opera house.

1,000,000

… dollars in Tesla shares donated by conductor Zubin Mehta to Florence's Teatro del Maggio Musicale.

53

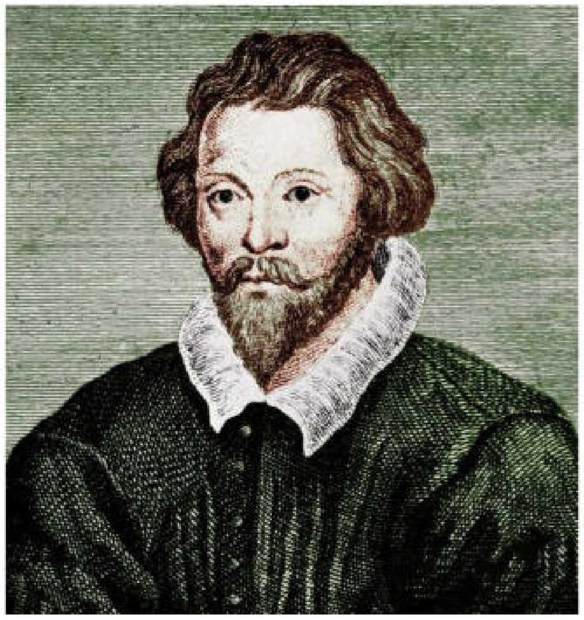
… prints by the inimitable musician, humourist and artist Gerard Hoffnung, recently made available for sale by art dealers King & McGaw.

1,200

… singers from across the globe, plus one organist, coming together for an online performance of Mahler's 'Symphony of a Thousand'.

ALAMY, GETTY

SoundBites



Man of letters: composer William Byrd

Verbal remedy

With the thrills of Wordle, the daily verbal brainteaser, currently taking the internet by storm, the music world has spotted a bandwagon and, predictably enough, jumped straight on it. Cue Byrdle which, named after the Tudor composer, takes the same format as Wordle – namely try to identify a five-letter word in as few guesses as possible – but always has a choral music-related term as its answer. Fair to say that word games are enjoying a bit of a Renaissance…

Plucky winner

Sean Shibe has been named as the first guitarist to win the Leonard Bernstein Award. Decided by a panel of judges that includes two of the composer and conductor's children, Jamie Bernstein Thomas and Alexander Bernstein, the award includes a prize of 10,000 euros and a showcase concert at the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival in Germany. Previous winners include pianist Lang Lang and organist Cameron Carpenter.

A loan from Lynn

Helen Nightengale, wife of the late Lynn Harrell, has set up a new initiative to ensure that the cellist's beloved Harrell Dungey instrument will continue to be played to admiring audiences. Applications are now being welcomed from talented young players for the Harrell Dungey Cello Loan Competition, the winner of which will enjoy a two-year loan of the cello, with the possibility of an extension of another year.

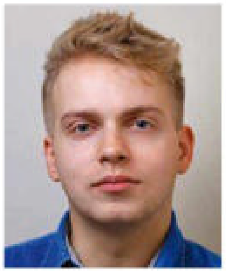
Hungary for more

A new museum dedicated to Hungarian music has opened in Budapest. Situated in the Hungarian capital's City Park, the Sou Fujimoto-designed House of Music is a celebration of all things melodious, from Liszt and Bartók to Hungarian pop music. It will feature both permanent and temporary exhibitions and will be able to stage concerts.

Rising Stars

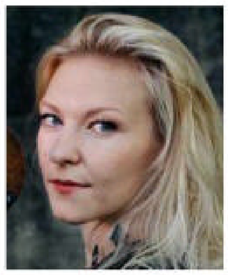
Three to look out for...

Hugh Cutting *Countertenor*



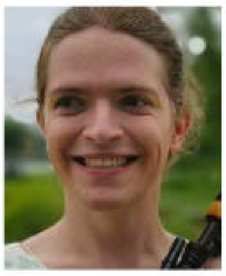
Born: Oxford, England
Career highlight: The concert I did for SoundVoice UK exploring vocal loss in conditions like Parkinson's and Motor Neurone Disease. More recently, winning First Prize at the Kathleen Ferrier Awards.
Musical hero: I admire Iestyn Davies and Tim Mead for their tone and consistency, Alice Coote for her flair and dramatic immersion and James Gilchrist and Michael Chance for being singers who perform with their hearts above all else.
Dream concert: Singing Britten's *Abraham and Isaac* with my brother Guy or a chamber opera by Piers Kennedy in an epic cathedral.

Amalie Stalheim *Cellist*



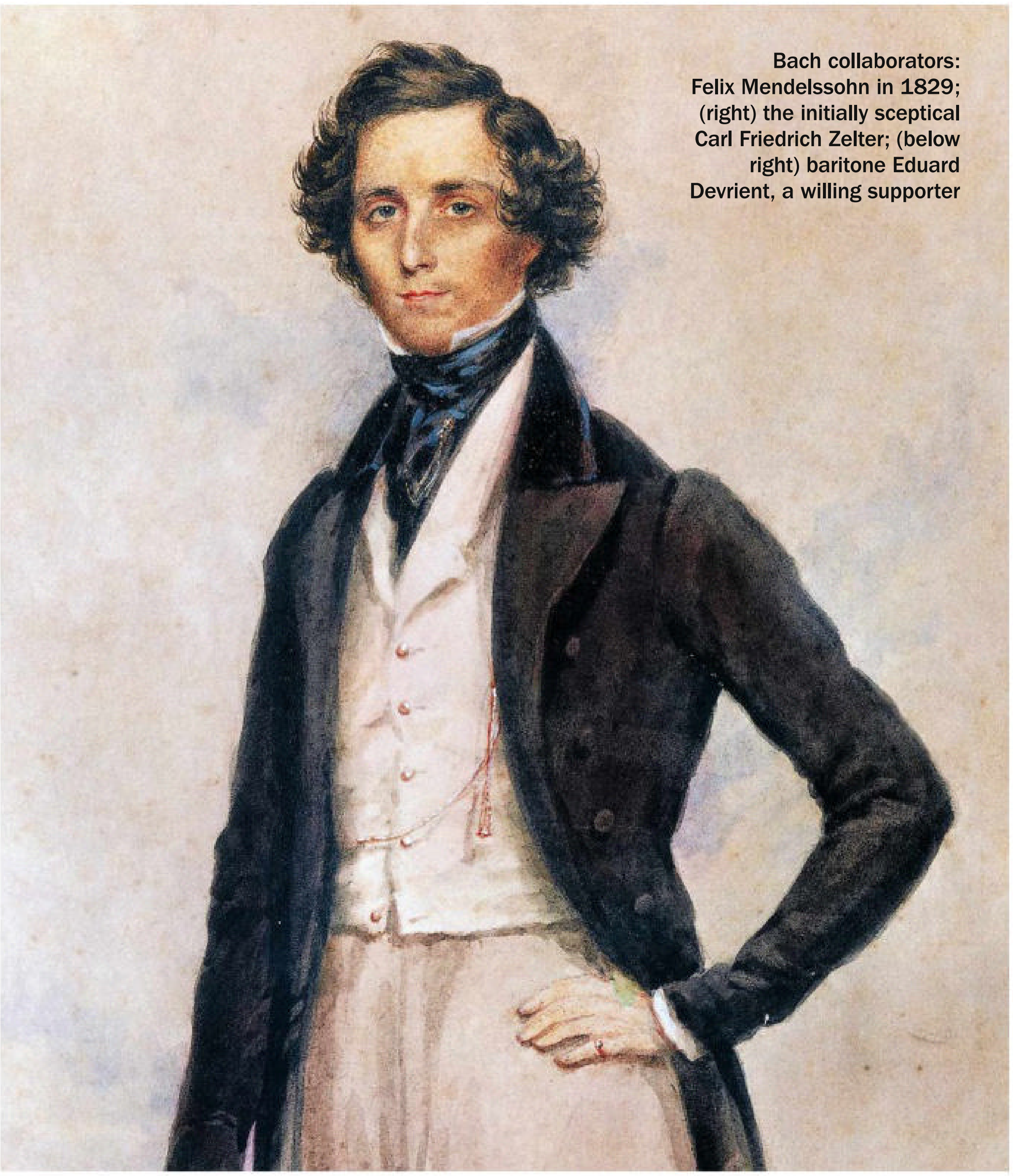
Born: Bergen, Norway
Career highlight: Performing Schubert's *Death and the Maiden* with Janine Jansen at her festival in the Netherlands. Our communication on stage was so intense, it felt almost electric. Plus recording Lasse Thoresen's Cello Concerto with the Oslo Phil for my debut album.
Musical hero: Mstislav Rostropovich is my inspiration, both as a cellist and for his dedication to combining core repertoire with new music. He played with such conviction.
Dream concert: To play Prokofiev's Sinfonia Concertante in one of the great halls in Europe, followed by a jazz session with Ella Fitzgerald!

Malin Lewis *Piper and fiddler*



Born: Eilean Shona, Scotland
Career highlight: My year spent studying at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki taught me how to listen deeply. Recently, I worked as musical director on the play *The Strange Undoing of Prudencia Hart*. I wrote music and improvised with musicians from all genres, which was only possible because of my Finnish training.
Musical hero: It's so interesting to see artists who studied classical violin – like the Celtic musician Martyn Bennett – be influenced by their training to transcend genre.
Dream concert: A performance of improvised and semi-improvised music with set design at the Manchester Royal Exchange Theatre, a mind-blowing space.

TIMEPIECE This month in history



Bach collaborators: Felix Mendelssohn in 1829; (right) the initially sceptical Carl Friedrich Zelter; (below right) baritone Eduard Devrient, a willing supporter

GETTY, ANIA URBANOWSKA

MARCH 1829

Mendelssohn's *Passion* sparks a JS Bach revival

Hard as it is to imagine, there was a time when JS Bach's *St Matthew Passion* was virtually unknown outside Leipzig, where it was first performed in 1727. Sporadic performances continued at the city's Thomaskirche, where Bach had been music director, after his death in 1750. But the broader world knew nothing of what we nowadays view as one of the supreme choral pieces.

Until, that is, a precocious youth named Felix Mendelssohn was given a copy of the *St Matthew Passion* by his grandmother nearly 100 years later. Mendelssohn was 15 at the time (1824), and already the composer of 12 dashing String Symphonies. But his encounter with the *Matthew Passion*, one biographer wrote, was 'revelatory', and became 'a cornerstone of his musical faith'. Could he get a performance of this long-unheard masterwork organised?

Mendelssohn's initial thought was that he couldn't. Bach's *Passion* was too long – three hours – and unfamiliar to most audience members and musicians. These were formidable barriers to putting a concert performance together, and Mendelssohn 'utterly disbelieved it could be done'. Instead, he jestingly offered to 'give a public performance on a rattle and penny-trumpet', which fortunately never happened.

Mendelssohn did, though, participate in sing-throughs of the *Passion* at home with friends, and this stoked his enthusiasm further. 'No living man but you can conduct its performance,' the baritone Eduard Devrient told him, and Mendelssohn was gradually won over. With Devrient, he approached his teacher Carl Friedrich Zelter, conductor of a Berlin choir both Mendelssohn and his sister Fanny sang in.

Zelter had wanted to mount the *Matthew Passion* himself, but never managed it. Would he support a project hatched by a teenager with limited conducting experience and a singer in his twenties? To begin with, he was unimpressed with their plans for a performance. 'Do you think that a couple of young donkeys like you will be able to accomplish it?', he fulminated. But he eventually relented, agreeing to lend them his Singakademie choir and its concert hall.

The version of the *St Matthew Passion* heard by a capacity audience on 11 March 1829 was, however, very different to the one we know today. No doubt worried about over-taxing the audience's attention span, Mendelssohn cut ten arias and six chorales, halving the work's duration. The 158-strong choir was far bigger than Bach would have used, and Mendelssohn conducted from a piano, not the harpsichord of Bach's era.

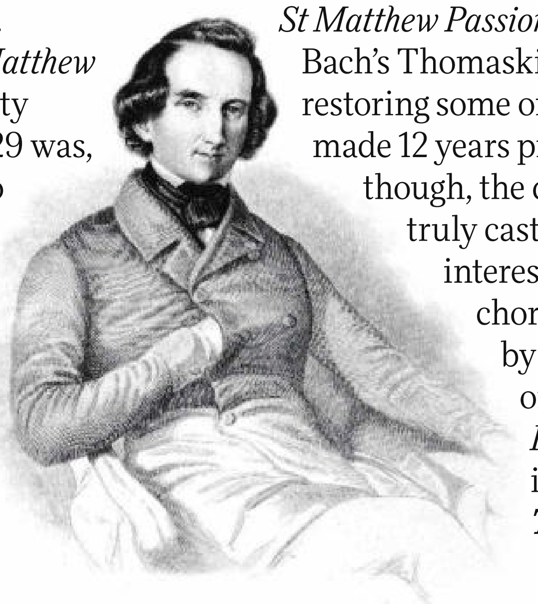
None of this mattered to an enthralled capacity audience, which included luminaries such as the Prussian King, the poet Heine and the philosopher Hegel. The choir, Fanny Mendelssohn recorded, sang 'with a fire, a striking power and also with a touching delicacy and softness the like of which I have never heard'. Her brother Felix, now aged 20, had achieved 'a perfect success', she added.

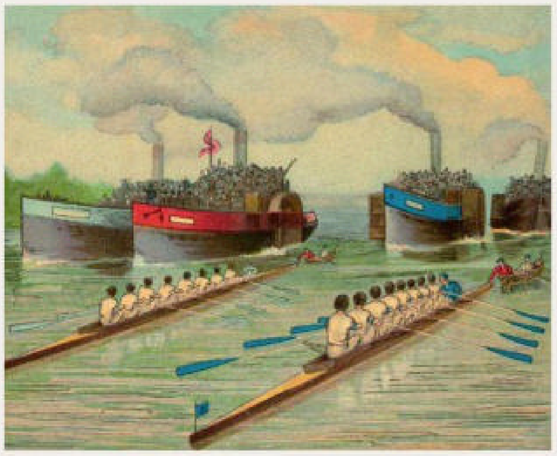
'Do you think a couple of young donkeys like you will be able to accomplish it?'

His success resounded. The 1,000-plus applicants who missed out on tickets for the 11 March concert clamoured for a repeat performance. This happened ten days later, on Bach's birthday (21 March), and on Good Friday (17 April) Zelter's long-time ambition to conduct the *St Matthew Passion* was finally realised, when he led a third performance.

Mendelssohn's devotion to Bach continued for the remaining 18 years of his life, and he conducted the *St Matthew Passion* again in 1841 at Bach's Thomaskirche in Leipzig, restoring some of the cuts he'd made 12 years previously. By then, though, the die was well and truly cast: the revival of interest in Bach's major choral works, catalysed by the 1829 revival of the *St Matthew Passion*, had become irreversible.

Terry Blain





Thames tussle: Oxford wins the first Boat Race

Also in March 1829

4th: Andrew Jackson, a former army general, is inaugurated as the seventh president of the US, having overwhelmingly defeated John Quincy Adams in the election. Over his eight-year presidency, Jackson will win acclaim for succeeding in wiping out the US national debt – the only president ever to do so – though his anti-abolitionist stance and forced relocation of Indian tribes will see him less favourably remembered.

5th: John Adams, the last survivor of the *HMS Bounty* mutineers who settled in the Pitcairn Islands, dies aged 61. During much of his 39 years in the South Pacific, Adams devoted himself to educating the islanders and converting them to Christianity, assisted by fellow mutineer Ned Young. Adamstown, the only settlement on the sparsely populated islands, is named after him.

12th: At a meeting of the Cambridge University Boat Club Committee, a resolution is passed to 'challenge the University of Oxford to row a match at or near London, each in an eight-oared boat during the ensuing Easter vacation'. The first ever Oxford vs Cambridge **Boat Race** eventually takes place over a two-mile course on the River Thames in Henley on 10 June, with Oxford emerging as easy winners.

22nd: Following the Greek War of Independence, envoys from Britain, France and Russia agree the second London Protocol, recognising an autonomous **Greek state**. Under the terms of the protocol, the territory of the new state will include the Peloponnese and Continental Greece as well as the Cyclades islands. It is also agreed that Greece will pay an annual tribute of 1.5 million piastres to the Ottoman Empire.

31st: Despite suffering from poor health, Francesco Saverio Maria Felice Castiglioni succeeds Leo XII as Pope, assuming the pontifical name of **Pius VIII**. His rule will prove the shortest of the 19th century, lasting just 20 months until his death in November 1830, and he passes few reforms.

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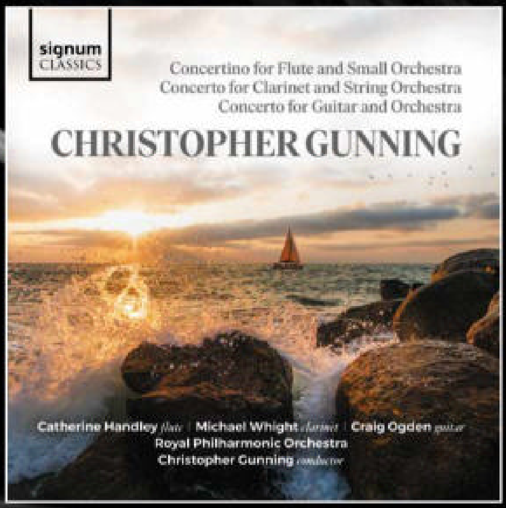

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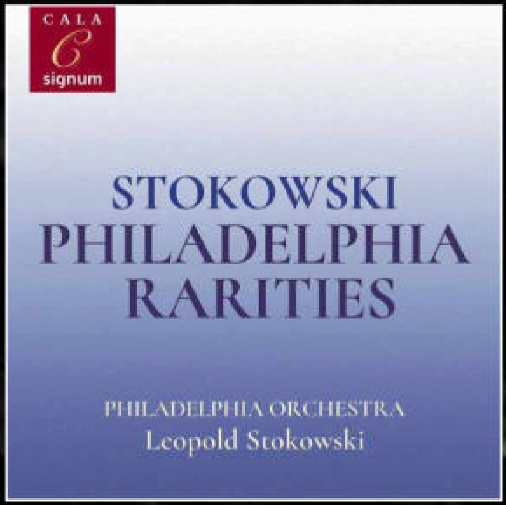

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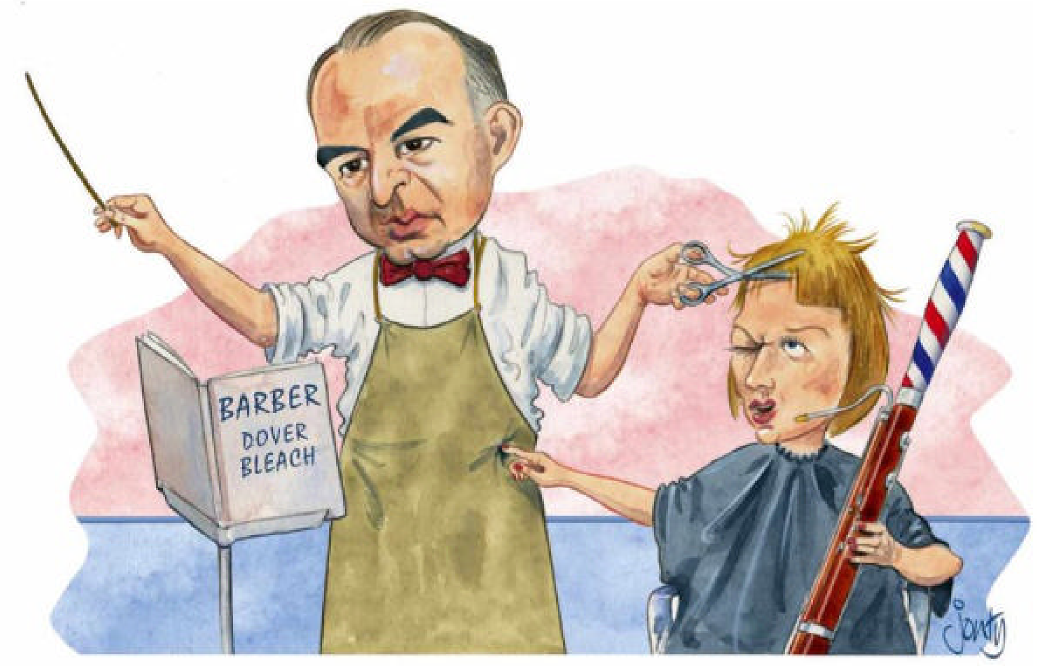


Concertgebouw musicians prove a cut above

To highlight the inconsistencies of Dutch Covid-19 regulations that prevented arts institutions from admitting visitors while allowing beauticians and hairdressers to carry on as normal, Amsterdam's Concertgebouw Orchestra recently invited a barber on stage during a rehearsal so it could play in front of a small audience. Headlines were duly secured, though no mention has been made of what they played. Time, then, for the *BBC Music* crew to make some suggestions. Something by Samuel Barber or Bob Chilcott maybe? Plus Bach's Hair on a G String and some other orchestral highlights? Hopefully, they didn't cut any bars out, as that would have been no way to beehive.

DÉJÀ VU

History just keeps on repeating itself…

On 5 March, Handel's (pictured left) *Messiah* is set to be given a new visual twist when the famous oratorio will be performed by the Paragon Singers in a dramatised production at St Swithin's Church in Bath. Directed by Tom Guthrie, it is by no means the first great choral work to be acted out on stage…

Though **Handel**'s oratorios were initially intended to be performed as concert works, a number have been adapted very successfully as opera productions. Perhaps the most noteworthy of these was Glyndebourne's *Theodora* in 1996 which, directed by Peter Sellars and with Lorraine Hunt excelling as Irene, is still talked about in revered tones. Sellars has good form in this territory. Another of his triumphs was 2010's semi-staged **JS Bach** *St Matthew Passion*, performed by the Berlin Philharmonic under Simon Rattle with a starry cast that included tenor Mark Padmore, bass Christian Gerhaher and mezzo Magdalena Kožená. After its debut in Berlin, it was filmed as an award-winning DVD and, in 2014, staged at the BBC Proms. Bach's great champion **Mendelssohn** (see p14) would doubtless have approved, just as he may have enjoyed various dramatisations of his own *Elijah* over the years, from Opera North's production in Ampleforth in 2007 to that by the Orpheus Choir of Wellington, New Zealand, in 2015. And even rarities enjoy a little dramatisation now and then, as our exploration of a new production of *The Salvation of Israel by the Hands of Esther*, a 1774 oratorio by the Austrian composer **Lidarti**, reveals on p52.

BEN EALOVEGA ILLUSTRATION: JONTY CLARK

MEET THE COMPOSER

Rachel Portman

Stage ambition: 'I would compose another opera any day'

Rachel Portman has established herself as one of the leading British voices in film music. The first woman composer to win an Oscar (for 1996's *Emma*), she has also written a children's opera and a musical and is increasingly in demand in the concert hall. Her *Eden*, written for mezzo Joyce DiDonato and has just been released on Erato.

I started writing pieces when I was a teenager. I knew I wanted to be a composer, but I didn't identify with film until I was at university. I did a student film and found the alchemy of what happens when you put music to film intoxicating. I had no female role models, so I was furrowing my own path.

***Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit* was an important early project.** It was such an iconic piece of television, and I was able to write really bold music. Beeban Kidron, the director, then went to Hollywood to make her first studio film and she argued the case for me coming and being her composer on it. I was very lucky and I owe her a lot.

It was a huge surprise to win the Oscar. I was just having lunch today and looked above the kitchen sink; there behind some cookery books is this shiny Oscar. Of course I care about it deeply, but it's not on show or anything.

Working away from the screen is a different discipline. It's hard and you have to dig deep. I love film, but I've also discovered in the last 15-18 years that I love working with words.

***Eden* is an environmental piece with words by the wonderful lyricist Gene Scheer.** He wrote this really beautiful piece. I sent Joyce [DiDonato] a piano recording that she could sing on top of; she had a couple of notes, but she was so generous and polite. She was thrilled with it, so I orchestrated it and she recorded it. What she brings to it is so moving.

I did a musical and I'm really not keen to do another one! I found that really tedious, because it was just rewrites, rewrites, rewrites. I would do another opera any day, though.

I compose at a lovely Bösendorfer piano. When I bought it from Vienna, the company very kindly made me a purpose-built music stand for it – it's higher so I can fit a piece of orchestral scoring paper on it. It means so much to me and it's a beautiful instrument. That's all I need.

Studio Secrets

Signing: Eldbjørg Hemsing teams up with Sony

We reveal who's recording what and where...

Sony Classical recently announced its exclusive signing of ***Eldbjørg Hemsing***. The Norwegian violinist already released a single ('Winter Meditation') at the end of last year to coincide with a performance at the Nobel Peace Prize Concert. Her first full album for Sony is scheduled for Autumn.

Speaking of debuts, Samoan tenor ***Pene Pati*** has recorded his first album for Warner Classics, following much-lauded performances on the opera stage in Europe. Titled, simply, *Pene Pati*, it features showstoppers and rarer gems by Gounod, Rossini, Verdi, Donizetti, Meyerbeer and Benjamin Godard. The album will be released on 25 March.

Earthy Records is a new label initiative from innovative duo The Living Earth Show (aka Andy Meyerson and Travis Andrews). The label offers comprehensive artistic support to composers, and each new release will exist digitally, physically, as a film and in printed scores. The first of its quarterly releases includes music by US composers Danny Clay, Samuel Adams, Sahba Aminikia and Sarah Hennies.

The ***San Francisco Symphony*** also continues to innovate with its own recording projects. The latest, just released, sees it perform Ligeti's *Lux Aeterna*, *Ramifications* and *Clocks and Clouds* alongside visuals generated by Artificial Intelligence in reaction to the music. The 35-minute recording is available to hear (and see) for free on the *SFSymphony+* platform online or via their app.

American pianist ***Orion Weiss*** is about to release the first of an anticipated three-part recording cycle. The *Arc* series aims to take the listener from hope and despair to loss and renewal through solo works composed from 1911 to post-World War I. *Arc I* takes in music by Granados, Janáček and Scriabin and is available on the FHR label from 18 March.

REWIND

Great artists talk about their past recordings

This month: PHILIPPE HERREWEGHE *Conductor*

MY FINEST MOMENT

Gesualdo *Madrigali libro quinto*

Collegium Vocale Gent/
Philippe Herreweghe

Phi LPH036 (2021)

Many of my recordings have been dedicated to Baroque music and, more specifically, to JS Bach, because that was – so they say – my speciality when I was young. There are few Bach recordings of which I'm really completely proud; in that sense I would say that I am self-critical. However, I think my best recordings, in a way, are the smaller masses.

Something I do find fantastic is the Gesualdo Madrigals, which the Collegium Vocale Gent has done in the last few years. We recorded the Fourth and Fifth Books and I'm very happy with them. The music is fantastic, the singers we gathered for the project were incredible and I think it's well recorded.

I work a lot on the text, on the meaning and poetry of it. When you work on pieces by Gesualdo (or Monteverdi), it's sometimes difficult. Even Italian people don't always understand what it means, because it can be very complicated.

Bound to Bach: Philippe Herreweghe has recorded the great composer regularly

When I listen to Italian groups, I often wonder if they really know what they sing? The reason is that they don't take time to work on the text; we do that and we work hard on it.

MY FONDEST MEMORY

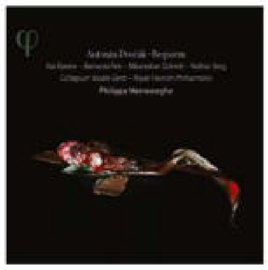
Dvořák *Requiem*

Collegium Vocale Gent; Royal Flemish Philharmonic/Philippe Herreweghe et al

Phi LPH016 (2015)

Since 2010 we've gradually done more and more of the big 19th-century oratorio repertoire. We recorded the Dvořák Requiem in 2014 at De Singel in Antwerp; I like Dvořák more and more, in fact, and I'm very happy with this recording. At that time, I was also chief conductor of the Royal Flemish Philharmonic (now the Antwerp Symphony Orchestra), so we had the opportunity to do more of the bigger works we didn't do before.

I had a vision of the Requiem as being bombastic, as it's often done with very big choirs and with very big operatic voices. When I listen to traditional recordings of it, I hear that the music is great, but very often the choirs have a kind of singing that I don't like. They think it's Romantic singing, but Dvořák, too, needs precise tuning, articulation and phrasing.



It's so much more rewarding to do a piece you've never done before; you can make something out of it and there's no comparison with your past achievements. This Dvořák was brand new for us, and very few had performed it before. So that was a big advantage and you can hear the energy in the recording.

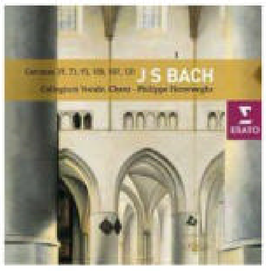
I'D LIKE ANOTHER GO AT...

JS Bach *Cantatas*

Collegium Vocale Gent/ Philippe Herreweghe et al

Erato 5620252 (2002)

I would like to do some things again, but not everything. I'm 74, so if things go well I have perhaps five years more to be healthy and so on. I cannot imagine that I could do my Bach recordings any better at the age I am now, or with the experience I have in life. There are some very beautiful Bach Cantatas that we recorded, like Cantata Eight (*Liebster Gott, wenn werd ich sterben?*), that will never be recorded again, but I would like to record most of the other cantatas again. It's perhaps scandalous to say that the Bach cantatas are always very good music



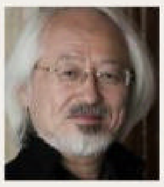
but that there is a big difference between them. I believe, of course, in the quality of the Bible, as it's like Shakespeare, but I don't believe so much what the text says. But the music itself is so fantastic that I would like to record some of them again.

We recorded most of the Bach cantatas in churches – hiring churches is not as expensive as a concert hall. So I would prefer to record them in a very good concert hall; for example, the Tchaikovsky Concert Hall in Moscow, where the acoustic is so inspiring, or the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam.

Herreweghe and Collegium Vocale Gent's 'Bach Box' collection is out now on Phi

NIKOLAI LUND, MICHIEL HENDRYCKX, MARCO BORGGREVE, GETTY

Buried Treasure



Harpsichordist and conductor *Masaaki Suzuki* introduces his favourite recordings

Rossi Toccata No. 7 in D

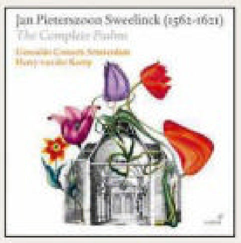
Ton Koopman (harpsichord)

Harlekijn 2441 502

Before I went to Amsterdam to study with Ton Koopman, my harpsichord teacher in Japan introduced me to this recording. It's one of Koopman's very first, and it was so impressive for me that I immediately made up my mind to go to him to study. Rossi was completely unknown to me, and this Toccata is a very interesting piece with a lot of chromaticism. It's typical of the style of the Italian early Baroque toccata; it is completely free, there is no format at all and it's full of unexpected moments.

Sweelinck Psalm 150

Gesualdo Consort Amsterdam/Harry van der Kamp *Glossa GCD922407*

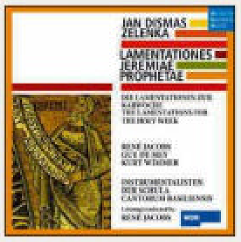


I am very interested in music based on the 16th-century *Genevan Psalter*. These arrangements of all 150 psalms are some of the most exquisite, complicated and interesting choir music. Sweelinck used to be the town organist in Amsterdam at the time and his keyboard music is much more known, but his wonderful choral music is rarely performed. The arrangements are for three and eight voices, and rhythmically and harmonically they're so exquisite.

Zelenka Lamentationes

Kurt Widmer (baritone); Instrumentalisten der Schola Cantorum Basiliensis

DHM G010000141327l4



Kurt Widmer is one of the most wonderful baritone singers. *Lamentationes* is, of course, very famous and many composers wrote music based on it, but Zelenka was one of the most interesting and important composers in Dresden. This features only solos, and it is, especially, the first one for baritone that is very impressive. It's meditative music with wonderful harmonies, subtle harmonic changes and different tempos.

THE LISTENING SERVICE

Dramatic openings

They originally heralded an on-stage drama, but ultimately they inspired purely orchestral narratives. It's high time to revive the overture, says **Tom Service**

ILLUSTRATION: MARIA CORTE MAIDAGAN

No concert used to be complete without their scintillation of sound and story, and yet today, they find themselves in musical stables reserved for clapped-out warhorses, the final staging post before orchestral oblivion: what happened to overtures? Why don't we hear Reznicek's *Donna Diana* or Johann Strauss's *Fledermaus* or Kabalevsky's *Colas Breugnon* any more?

The art of overture composition starts in the opera houses of the 17th century. Claudio Monteverdi's overture for *L'Orfeo* is a brief and brassy fanfare that says: 'Pay attention! Listen to this!' Throughout the rest of the 17th century and into the 18th, the operatic overture became a more extended warm-up for the instrumentalists and the audience in Jean-Baptiste Lully's operas in Paris and Antonio Vivaldi's in Italy. An indulgent orchestral upbeat was necessary before curtain-up, not least because a large proportion of the aristocratic punters wouldn't dream of turning up at the start of the opera: the overture was a bridge between worlds, a vamp-till-ready across real life to the fantastical world of theatre.

Mozart went furthest of all in making that bridging of worlds audible. In his overture to *The Marriage of Figaro* – written at the last minute, as his operatic overtures usually were – Mozart composes the sound of audience hubbub and excitement in a febrile, bustling *pianissimo* at the start of the overture, before an irresistible *forte* crashes in to claim our attention.

In the early 19th century, as well as the barnstorming popularity of Rossini's overtures, the seismic moment for overture-composition is the fourfold experimentation of Beethoven's pieces for the opera now known as *Fidelio* – formerly *Leonora*. His three *Leonora* overtures are successively more amibitous remixes and retellings

Leonora No. 3 inspired the blazing imagination of Liszt, Richard Strauss and Sibelius

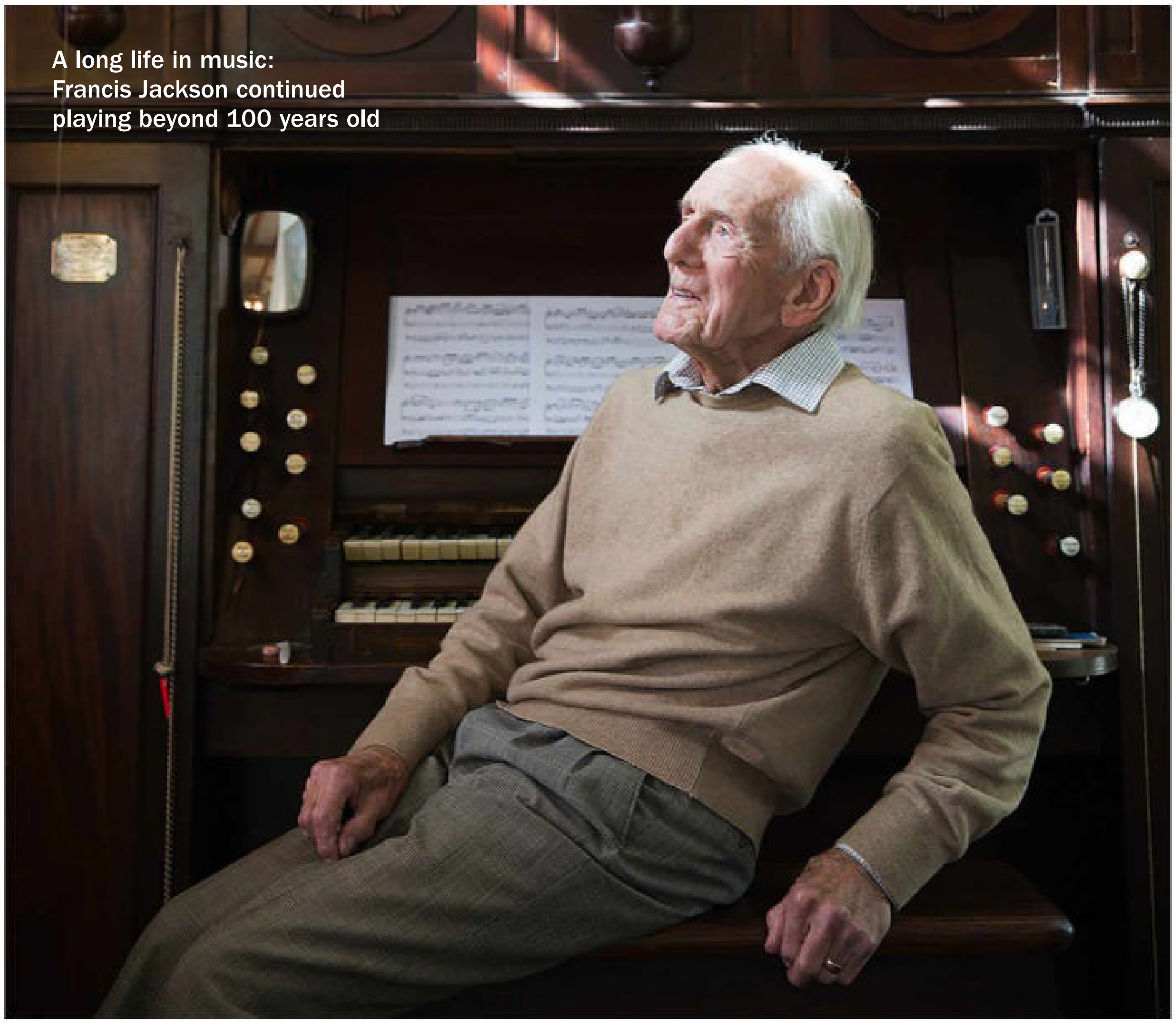
of the entire plot of the opera, using only the medium of orchestral sound. Beethoven's final attempt, the overture for *Fidelio*, is the most compact and the most efficient as an operatic opener, but it's the third *Leonora* Overture that's the most significant. *Leonora* No. 3 showed the narrative power an orchestra could achieve on its own, and was a template for the 19th century's concert overtures, from Mendelssohn's *Hebrides* to Brahms's *Academic Festival*, instrumental pieces that are both sufficient unto themselves yet tell emotional stories that can only be realised through orchestral sound. No. 3 also inspired the blazing freedom and imagination of Liszt's symphonic poems, and it's the progenitor of Richard Strauss's and Sibelius's tone poems too.

It's all that imagination in all those overtures that we're missing in a world of supposedly more innovative orchestral programming: so let's bring these dazzling concert openers back from the glue factory of music history to the racecourse of the repertoire once again, from Suppé to Lehár, from Auber to Offenbach!

BBC RADIO 3 90–93FM

Tom Service explores how music works in *The Listening Service* on Sundays at 5pm

FAREWELL TO…


A long life in music: Francis Jackson continued playing beyond 100 years old

Francis Jackson Born 1917

Organist, Choirmaster, Composer

Jackson's advanced years meant that he was one of the last in recent memory to have worked alongside some of English church music's great figures. One such great was the organist of York Minster and composer Edward Bairstow, who in 1929 heard an 11-year-old Jackson's talent at the piano and enrolled him as a chorister at the Minster, without requiring him to serve a probationary year. Jackson regarded Bairstow as one of his foremost influences (he wrote Bairstow's biography) and continued studying with him until his call-up to the army in 1940, serving in North Africa until the end of the war. Returning to York, he slid onto the assistant organist bench without interview – after all, Bairstow himself was his referee. When Bairstow died in 1946, Jackson was immediately appointed organist and director of music. He stayed at the Minster until 1982, where he become renowned not only for his sure hand with the choir, but also his phenomenal playing, evident in several acclaimed recordings. Jackson was president of the Royal College of Organists from 1972-74, and was awarded a CBE in 2007.

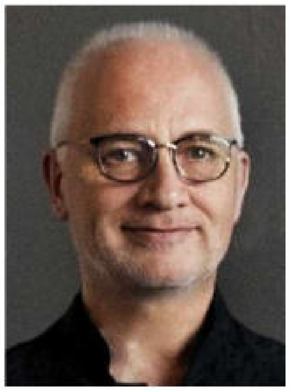
Maria Ewing Born 1950

Mezzo-soprano, Soprano

Here was an opera star who turned heads, and occasionally raised eyebrows. Ewing's dramatic prowess and comic timing saw her dominate the stage in a number of memorable roles in the US, UK and Europe, while her voice sometimes divided opinion. Whether it was the style of her singing, or the fact she switched from mezzo-soprano to soprano roles later in her career, critics and fans often bumped heads. She certainly won't be forgotten. Born in Detroit, Michigan, Ewing studied with Jennie Tourel and Eleanor Steber among others before making her stage debut at the 1973 Ravinia Festival. Three years later, she appeared at The Met for the first time and was a regular presence there. She worked often with director Peter Hall (to whom she was married from 1982-90), turning in dazzling performances at Glyndebourne, including Poppea and Carmen, not to mention a 1986 appearance as Strauss's Salome in Los Angeles that few who saw it are likely to forget.

Unforgettable: Maria Ewing as Strauss's Salome

ROB WHITROW, LISA-MARIE-MAZZUCCO, GETTY



Roger Tapping

Born 1960 *Violist*

You could take any one of Roger Tapping's ensemble tenures as a career high point. A founding member of the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, the English-born violist also played in the English Chamber Orchestra and the Allegri Quartet. But it was perhaps his move to the US in 1995 to join the Takács Quartet that would see his star rise fully. With the Takács he embarked on years of acclaimed concerts and recording projects, including celebrated cycles of Bartók and Beethoven for Decca. Many plaudits followed, including a Grammy. In 2013 Tapping joined the staff at the Juilliard School, having already become a firm fixture at the New England Conservatory, and took over from Samuel Rhodes in the famed Juilliard String Quartet.

Dale Clevenger Born 1940 *Horn player*

A popular figure in American music, the Grammy-winning Dale Clevenger served an impressive 47 years with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra as principal horn. His versatility meant he was as at home in the big-boned repertoire of the great composers as he was playing jazz or in chamber ensembles. Born in Chattanooga, Tennessee, Clevenger began his musical life as a young trumpeter before switching to the french horn. He studied at Carnegie Mellon in Pittsburgh and began his professional life in the ranks of the American Symphony Orchestra and the Symphony of the Air. He also found time to conduct, with 14 years on the podium with the Elmhurst Symphony not to mention guest-conducting appearances across North America and in Europe.

Also remembered…

Tom Hammond (*born 1974*) was a British conductor – most recently with the St Albans Symphony – who studied under Charles Mackerras and founded the Hertfordshire Festival of Music.

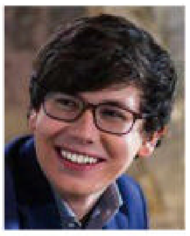
Finnish composer and teacher **Paavo Heininen** (*born 1938*) studied under both Rautavaara and Lutosławski and was fondly regarded as the 'Grand Old Man of Finnish Modernism'.

Endlessly versatile: Martin James Barlett is impressed by Renée Fleming

Music to my ears

What the classical world has been listening to this month

Martin James Bartlett
Pianist



Something that always turns up when I put my music on shuffle is Shura Cherkassky's recording of **Schulz-Evler**'s *Concert Arabesques on themes by Johann Strauss 'The Beautiful Blue Danube'*. It was one of the first classical piano recordings I ever heard, and it transformed my perception of the piano as a box of hammers to this glittering, capricious and witty thing – imagine all the beauty and excitement from the Vienna New Year's Day concert condensed into one piano piece.

I don't always listen to piano music, though. One piece I often return to is **Saint-Saëns**'s *Organ* Symphony. There's a recording conducted by Charles Munch, when he had just started his tenure as music director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, which still feels fresh after all these years. It's a masterpiece and so well recorded – the detail is so intricate and clear, and Berj Zamkochian, the organist, gets a great range of colour from the instrument.

> 'The excitement of the Vienna New Year's Concert is condensed into one piano piece'

I'm always astounded by soprano **Renée Fleming**'s versatility. Her rendition of Joni Mitchell's 'River' on her album *Haunted Heart* is such an interesting take. An opera singer turning to jazz might not necessarily fit like a glove – but with Renée it really does. She moves so easily between operatic roles and the sensuality of jazz.

And also...
Just before the pandemic, a wonderful **French bistro** called Parkside Brasserie opened up near me in Elm Park. The owners have been so good to me, and the food is just exquisite – not pretentious at all. The chef Scott is self-taught and makes incredible escargots, steaks and duck breasts.

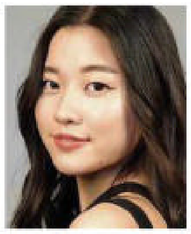
Featuring works by Rachmaninov and Gershwin, Martin James Bartlett's 'Rhapsody' is released by Warner Classics on 4 March

READER CHOICE

Alf Campbell
Penrith

Though your February *Timepiece* feature about **Schumann** throwing himself into the Rhine was interesting, I'd prefer to focus on a happier link between the composer and the river by heading a few kilometres upstream. Schumann's depiction of Cologne Cathedral in his 'Rhenish' Symphony is, in my opinion, almost as inspiring as the building itself and for me brings back happy memories of a visit to the city many years ago. Riccardo Muti's recording with the Vienna Philharmonic is my favourite.

Coco Tomita **Violinist**



There's a specific recording of **Beethoven**'s *Archduke* Piano Trio that I enjoy listening to – it's the one by violinist Isabelle Faust, cellist Jean-Guihen Queyras and pianist Alexander Melnikov. They play on period instruments, and I love the sound of the pianoforte in this piece. I particularly like the *Andante cantabile* third movement. Beethoven takes this simple tune and elaborates on it in such a fluid way – it's so heartfelt and the dialogue between the instruments really shines through.

I have followed the Netherlands Bach Society on YouTube for many years. The performance of **Bach**'s Chaconne by their director, Shunsuke Sato, is probably the most mind-blowing thing I have ever heard. The Chaconne is an intense journey, but the way he performs it is so free and light – in his bow stroke, it is almost like he is dancing to the spirit of Bach. Sato is a Baroque specialist, and I appreciate the period instrument sound in general. It's raw and, in a way, rustic.

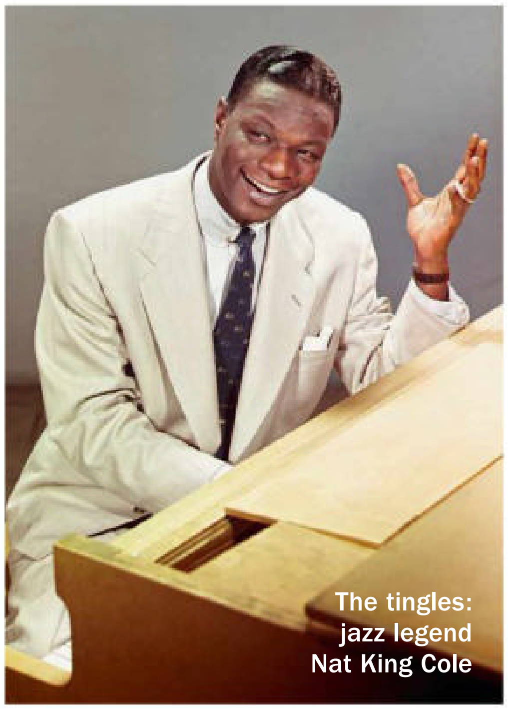
When I'm doing chores or, say, on a train journey, I like to put on **Nat King Cole**'s *Route 66* album. I've always been drawn to jazz, and every track on this album is very sweet and charming – I think of it being like a box of chocolates that

leaves you so satisfied at the end. There's one song where he skat sings, and it gives me the tingles. It makes me want to start dancing, and touches a different place that classical music never really does.

And also...

I have been passionate about **yoga** for years. If ever I feel lost, it's something in my life that really centres me again, both physically and mentally. It reminds me how to breathe and, while it's not exactly a work-out, it's a process with different moves that flow from one to the next. I particularly like the fact that it's something you can do almost everywhere. I reckon that every musician could benefit from it!

Coco Tomita's 'Origins' is released on Orchid Classics on 4 March



The tingles: jazz legend Nat King Cole

Julie Cooper Composer

I've been fascinated by the creativity that's come out of lockdown, and **Eliza Marshall**'s *The Rhythms of Migration* was released in November. It was Eliza's baby, but it's a real fusion and she had some incredible musicians playing on it – a combination of classical, jazz, ethnic instruments, soundtrack and folk. They created the project to raise awareness about the planet and nature. I particularly love the opening track, 'Awakenings'; it's a very atmospheric soundscape.

I came across violinist **Elena Urioste** and pianist **Tom Poster** for the first time, together, when they started to stream their amazing little recitals from Elena's parents' home in the States. Elena's tone was so amazing that I decided to ask her to play on my album. They've just released an album called *From Brighton to Brooklyn*, and there's a magical track on it called 'Cradle Song' by Frank Bridge, which I heard recently on Radio 3's *In Tune*.

Pianist and violinist **Poppy Ackroyd** released a hauntingly beautiful, intimate solo piano album recently. The projects she's done before have had combinations of electronics and chamber ensembles, but *Pause* is just piano. There's a track called 'Suspended', which she worked on with filmmaker Jola Kudela. It's so interesting, very eerie and quite ethereal, as she's just plucking the inside of the piano with both hands. It runs beautifully through the film that Jola has created, of London and Brighton's empty streets during lockdown.

And also...

I'm very much an outdoor runner, though not a serious marathon or 10km runner. I need to be **running** through fields or by water – not on roads, but anywhere that I can stop and take photos. Serious runners would think that's horrific! I need to be immersed in nature, and I never run with anything in my ears; I love to hear all the sounds around me. It's really inspiring and clears my head when I'm writing.

Julie Cooper's album 'Continuum' is out now on Signum Records

READER CHOICE

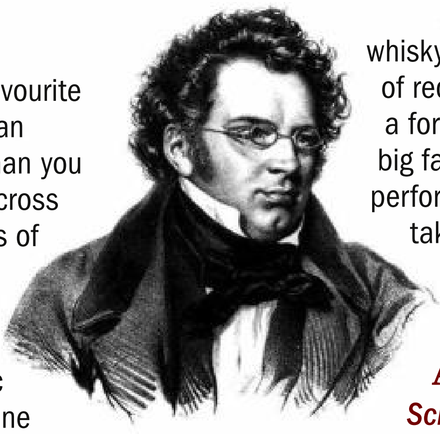
Graeme Jeal
Enfield

I recently rediscovered my Swedish Society LP of **Hugo Alfvén** (above) conducting two of his own works, *The Mountain King* and *The Prodigal Son*. These were recorded in 1954 and 1957 respectively and sound astonishingly good. It's incredible to listen to a composer born 150 years ago, leading his own works in sound that needs no apology for its age. *The Prodigal Son* is particularly tuneful, and became a Top 20 hit when the Polka was recorded as 'Swedish Polka'. The whole ballet suite, together with his Rhapsody No. 1, would make ideal BBC Proms pieces in Alfvén's 150th birthday year.

Our Choices The *BBC Music Magazine* team's current favourites

Charlotte Smith *Editor*

While attempting to list my favourite string quartet ensembles for an online piece (more difficult than you might imagine) I happened across some fabulous interpretations of *Schubert*'s (right) *Death and the Maiden*. From the smooth polish of the Alban Berg to the altogether more emphatic sound of the Amadeus, this one piece proved a brilliant template to compare the interpretative quirks of groups from the past 100 years – and, crucially, to withstand repeat listening by dint of its textural complexity.



Jeremy Pound *Deputy editor*

The first few weeks of 2022 have seen me binge listening to *Mozart*'s Piano Concertos. I've had them with me everywhere and anywhere – at my desk, in the kitchen, relaxing with a late-evening whisky – and have been enjoying a range of recordings, from Malcolm Bilson on a fortepiano to Piotr Anderszewski on a big fat Steinway. I won't name a favourite performer, as the variety of approaches taken to these 27 constantly surprising, supremely crafted works is part of the pleasure.

Alice Pearson *Cover CD editor*

Schubert's String Quintet really is chamber music at its best. The dialogue between the instruments is perfectly structured and there are some sublime melodies to touch the soul, notably in the first movement where the instruments pair off. A performance by the long-standing Borodin Quartet with cellist Alexander Buzlov still lingers fondly in my memory.

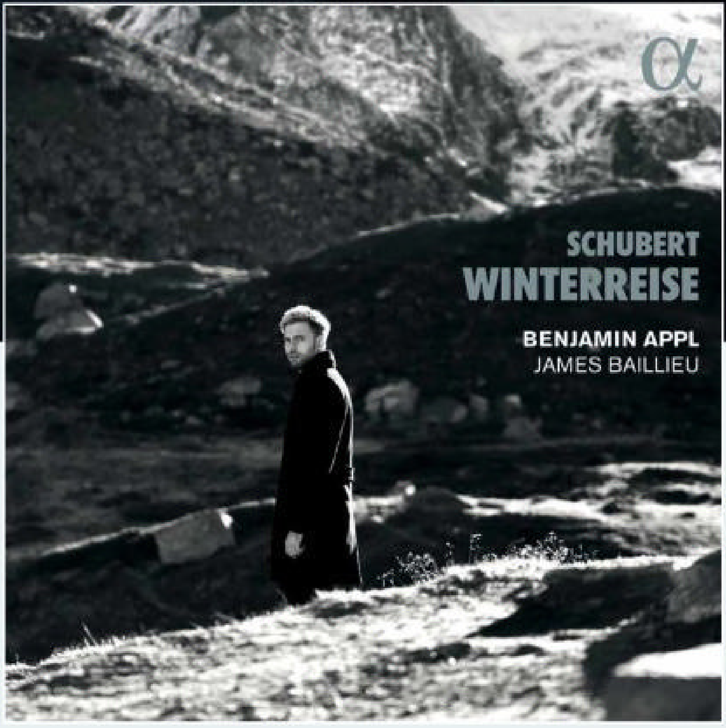
Michael Beek *Reviews editor*

I missed Ron Howard's documentary film *Pavarotti* when it was first released, so I was delighted to come across it on BBC iPlayer the other day. It's a beautifully intimate portrait of the man and his music, as told by those who knew and loved him. I particularly enjoyed the filmed excerpts of him singing; the words often cleverly mirrored moments in his own life story. It's available throughout the year, along with some other great classical documentaries.

Freya Parr *Digital editor and staff writer*

Annoyingly, I forgot to download any music before leaving the land of internet to spend a few weeks on the Isle of Harris. The only tracks I had saved on my phone were pieces I'd heard at an electrifying *Manchester Collective* concert. Some would turn to Mendelssohn or Maxwell Davies in such landscapes, but I was joined by the pulsating electronic textures of Michael Gordon's *Industry*, Bryce Dessner's *Aheym* and Dobrinka Tabakova's *Insight*. Surprisingly invigorating.

GETTY, ALAMY, PAUL MARC MITCHELL



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Richard Morrison

The UK's leading music colleges have always benefitted from European ties

Great institutions sometimes have strange beginnings. Take the Royal Academy of Music, Britain's oldest conservatoire, celebrating its 200th birthday this year. Three unlikely men were responsible for its genesis. Two were military commanders who played the violin for recreation and were clearly perturbed by the lack of training for British musicians. One was the Duke of Wellington, no less. Seven years after he had 'thrashed Bonaparte' (in WS Gilbert's immortal words), he rallied his rich friends to support the new Academy. The other was John Fane, Earl of Westmorland, another soldier-turned-politician, who fancied himself as a composer.

It was the third Academy founder, however, who has intrigued music historians the most. Nicolas-Charles Bochsa was a French harpist and composer who had fled Paris five years earlier to avoid being imprisoned for fraud and forgery (for which he was sentenced, in his absence, to 12 years' hard labour). Later, he would cause a scandal by running off with Anna Bishop, the greatest operatic soprano of the age and also the wife of the composer Henry Bishop. Early Victorian London was a lively place! It's widely thought that the character of the manipulative Svengali in George du Maurier's novel *Trilby* was based on Bochsa.

Something of a rogue, then. Yet he did more to shape the fledgling Academy than anyone else, especially in one respect. Foreign-born himself, he recruited other eminent foreigners to inspire the young British students. Beethoven's friend Ignatz Moscheles was brought in to teach piano; one of his first pupils was Fanny Dickens, Charles's older (and very gifted) sister. Similarly, the composer Carl Maria von Weber was persuaded to conduct the Academy's first orchestral concert in 1826.

This influx of foreigners was part of a greater trend throughout the 19th century. It had only been a few years since Haydn's visits had galvanised London's musical life. Mendelssohn appeared in Britain just seven years after the Academy was founded, inspiring our choral scene in particular. The first principal conductors of the Hallé Orchestra in Manchester and the Liverpool Philharmonic were German and Swiss respectively. Even as late as 1904, it was a German horn player who set up the London Symphony Orchestra.

> Restrict the free flow of musicians across national boundaries and everybody loses

You can see the pattern here. From Handel to Haitink, British music making has always been enriched by immigrants and visitors from Europe. That has been a source of celebration, not lament. Until recent years, that is. Sadly, the bitterness and divisions created by Brexit have changed the climate. Whichever way you voted in 2016, you can still regret that the politicians seem to have made little attempt to think through the cultural ramifications of restricting the free movement of workers between Britain and the EU. The obstacles imposed if musicians want to travel in either direction will now probably take years to sort out.

That has had an especially negative impact on our great music colleges. They are attracting fewer top young musicians and teachers from the EU, and their graduates now have much less opportunity to work in Europe.

British musical institutions, however, are experts in survival. Among the Academy's many bicentenary projects, one stands out for this reason. It's the launch of something called the Sir Elton John Global Exchange Programme, initially financed by a handsome donation (believed to be at least £2m) from the pop star who studied piano at the Academy as a teenager.

The fund is specifically aimed at countering the barriers of Brexit. It will enable Academy students to study abroad for up to a year, and give similar opportunities for students from 12 top conservatoires around the world to study in London. The list of participating institutions includes the Juilliard School in New York, the Paris Conservatoire, the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki, the Shanghai Conservatory and the top music colleges in Germany and Austria.

It's a visionary initiative, and much needed. Restrict the free flow of musicians across national boundaries and everybody loses: performers, composers and audiences. Standards drop; incomes fall; creativity becomes stifled by insularity. Whichever your side of the political fence, you can't want our musical life to become a backwater. All credit to the Academy, then, for opening its doors to the wider world. Let's hope many others follow its example.

Richard Morrison is chief music critic and a columnist of The Times

From strength to strength

Whether singing Schubert while administering vaccines or preparing to play Samson at the Royal Opera House, Nicky Spence is a versatile tenor with a truly choc-a-bloc diary. And, he tells Richard Morrison, he's just loving it

PHOTOGRAPHY: JOHN MILLAR

A staging of *The Valkyrie* in which the climactic ring of flames around Brünnhilde was removed because of 'safety issues' was never going to get ecstatic reviews. But one man emerged from English National Opera's misfiring show last autumn with his glowing reputation polished even more. Singing the role of Siegmund for the first time, the Scottish tenor Nicky Spence sounded born to perform Wagner. Yet earlier in the year, when he sang the part of the anguished Laca in *Jenůfa* at the Royal Opera, he sounded born to sing Janáček.

And doubtless when he returns to the Royal Opera in May to take the role of Samson in *Samson et Dalila,* he will sound born to sing Saint-Saëns. At 38, Spence has emerged as one of the most versatile and powerful tenors, and finest actors, on the scene today. And his packed schedule for 2022 suggests that every opera house in the world has suddenly woken up to his qualities.

HE'S ALSO FUNNY, engaging, generous and totally without pretensions. I can vouch for that. Starved of live entertainment during 2020's lockdown, and looking for something, anything, to write about, I went to one of soprano Mary Bevan's enterprising outdoor concerts in Hornsey, north London, and found Spence not just singing but acting as compère and stand-up comic as well. Later in the pandemic he became a volunteer vaccinator near his Deptford home in south London, administering jabs to 100 people a day and singing to them as well.

'It was either the highlight of their day or the worst part of it,' he laughs. 'It started because I found myself singing the odd bit of Schubert to calm people down before the injection. Especially those big beautiful black guys, who sat there all rough and tough until you got the needle out, at which point they turned to jelly.'

Did he train for long before adding these medical duties to his other accomplishments? 'I'd never done anything clinical before,' he replies. 'So I was training at home with a couple of grapefruits for a week or so, perfecting my jabbing technique. Then I upgraded to real people under supervision before I was let loose by myself.'

Spence was born and raised in Dumfries. 'So I'm almost English!' he says. 'In fact, the highlight of our year was the school trip to Carlisle.' Isn't he now president of the Dumfries Musical Theatre Company? 'Ooh, you've done a disgusting amount of research,' he says. 'Yes, and I'm also patron of the Scottish Opera Young Company. I'm trying to give young Scottish singers the kind of metaphorical trampoline that I didn't necessarily have.'

Spence's own childhood certainly wasn't easy. 'My dad was around for my early years, but then it all turned to slurry when I was about eight. Me and my mum were of no fixed abode for a while. So I guess I was from what used to be called a broken home. But everybody in the family is friends with everybody else now, which is lovely.'

Music and drama provided his exit from poverty, and eventually Dumfries. 'We never had a drama department at this village comprehensive in rural Scotland,' he says, 'but we used to put on shows ourselves. So as a teenager I was in Ibsen, I was directing *Little Red Riding Hood*, I was doing everything. I was a real hustler. I think that background brought me to where I am today.'

And his voice? Where did that come from? 'Well, my sister has a great voice too and my mother has got an amazing ear. She would harmonise to any Beatles or Mamas and Papas tune, and still does.'

Was he a notable treble before he turned into a tenor? 'Notable only in that you could hear me from distant hills, like a bagpipe,' he says. 'No, I didn't do any of the cathedral or church stuff. I was singing Whitney Houston and Tom Jones and music theatre songs.'

Early on, his vocal abilities were nurtured by a visiting Glaswegian singing teacher. 'She used to swear and hit the piano when I didn't sing a *legato* line. It was quite a physical way to learn technique.' She recommended that he audition for the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London. 'The Guildhall took a big punt on me,' he says. 'I was 16 when I auditioned and 17 when they let me in.'

Was it hard leaving home and living alone in London? 'Hard is an understatement,' he replies. 'I was terrified. I cried. I missed my mum so much and didn't have much dosh. I had to do so many

Major career change: Nicky Spence triumphs in *The Valkyrie*, 2021; (left) in 2006 as a kilted crossover artist at the Classical Brits; with tenor Vittorio Grigolo and trumpeter Alison Balsom

Scottish ties: with Iain Burnside at the 2016 Leeds Lieder Festival

'I have no desire to go on to Siegfried or Tristan. I want to sing lyrical music'

jobs to make ends meet. Bingo-calling, bar work, even working in the library at the Guildhall, where they used to tell me to shut up because I was too loud.'

That all changed in the most remarkable way. 'At that time in my life I just wanted to be famous,' Spence admits. 'And I was offered what I thought was a golden ticket. Except it wasn't really.'

The 'golden ticket' came from Decca. Its executives were looking for the next 'crossover' star tenor, and thought this precocious Scottish lad at the Guildhall could fit the part. Spence was offered a five-album, million-pound deal.

'I was 21,' he says. 'At that age I had a jawline and a waistline and some hair. I was dangerously good-looking. It's all gone to seed now.'

At first, he admits, he enjoyed 'the crazy process'. He even thought he could retain his integrity and have some control over repertoire. 'I would say things like, "We've got to have *A Chloris* by Reynaldo Hahn on the disc; it's my favourite song ever." And they would reluctantly agree because they wanted me to sing "My Heart Will Go On" [from *Titanic*] in Italian. And I got to tour with Shirley Bassey. I was her support act. I think they thought I would help to bring in the gay pound.'

After two albums, though, it dawned on Spence that he had taken a colossal wrong turn. 'I knew that my shelf life as a

ARENA PAL, GETTY

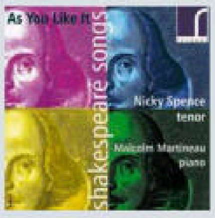
Nicky Spence's top albums

Five essential recordings to explore

Janáček
The Diary of One Who Disappeared
Hyperion CDA 68282

Nicky Spence fully inhabits the drama of this unusual song cycle, with pianist Julius Drake and mezzo Václava Housková his sultry seductress.

As You Like It: Shakespeare Songs
Resonus RES 10116



This selection of Shakespeare songs by a range of composers from Schubert to Tippett provides a fine showcase for Spence's versatility.

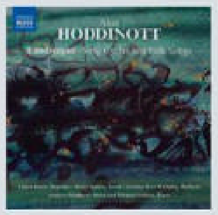
Paradis sur Terre: A French Songbook
Chandos CHAN 10893

Spence performs songs by Debussy and lesser-known song cycles by Lili Boulanger, Caplet and Chaminade, with pianist Malcolm Martineau.

Buxton Orr Songs
Delphian DCD 34175

For this collection of songs closer to Spence's Scottish roots, his nimble and characterful singing is accompanied by pianist Iain Burnside.

Hoddinott Landscapes: song cycles and folksongs *Naxos 8.571360*

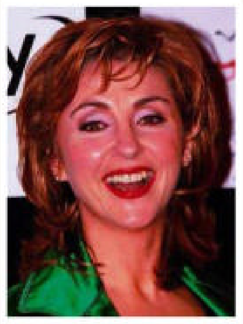


In these characterful songs, Spence's interpretation is well matched by Andrew Matthews-Owen's superb pianism.

Inspiring voices: Gareth Malone with The Military Wives in 2020

Learning curves

When musicians on TV show and tell



In being a mentor on Sky Arts's *Anyone Can Sing*, Nicky Spence follows in a long tradition of well-known musicians who have appeared on TV to provide expertise to those learning pretty much from scratch. Back in 1995, for instance, soprano Lesley Garrett (above) pitched in to help on BBC One's **Jobs for the Girls** when *Birds of a Feather* actresses Pauline Quirke and Linda Robson were tasked with singing 'Rule, Britannia!' at an open-air concert.

Rather more serious in ambition were two series of **The Choir** (BBC Two; 2006-08), in which conductor Gareth Malone worked with schoolchildren with little or no musical background and, in a few months, trained them to sing in large-scale concerts. Two further *The Choir* series with adults, **Unsung Town** and **Military Wives**, soon followed.

The BBC also broadcast **Play It Again** (2007) and **Maestro** (2008). The former saw six celebrities take up instruments and perform them in public: comedienne Jo Brand's path to a date at the Albert Hall was guided by tutors including Jools Holland. *Maestro* was a knock-out competition in which the likes of actress Jane Asher, TV presenter Peter Snow and comedienne Sue Perkins learnt to wield the baton under the watchful eye of Sir Roger Norrington. In 2012 came **Maestro at the Opera**, in which *Strictly Come Dancing* judge Craig Revel Horwood, with some expert guidance from Sir Mark Elder, emerged triumphant.

A perfect fit: after Wagner and Janáček, Spence has Saint-Saëns in his sights

crossover performer was hurtling towards me at lightning speed. And I realised that I felt hugely underskilled as a singer. So I decided to stop fannying around on Scottish hillsides in a kilt, pretending to be the next Kenneth McKellar, and go back to the Guildhall to do the opera course. And in the end I think I did get back my integrity because I was very serious about what I did.'

So I found myself rehearsing Wagner while singing *Jenůfa* at Covent Garden. That was knackering because they are entirely different tessituras.'

The experience hasn't dimmed his enthusiasm for Janáček. 'He's my favourite composer. I love the honesty. I'm doing *The Makropulos Case* with [soprano] Emma Bell next. That's a scoop, by the way!'

'In opera, beyond singing you have to be a dancer, an athlete, a mathematician'

Since then it's been an uninterrupted climb to the top, though he admits that he is more 'strategic' these days about the roles he accepts. 'When I was younger I was just happy to be working and accepted almost everything. Then I found I was singing Zimmermann's *Die Soldaten* one day and *The Magic Flute* the next. I realised that I wouldn't have a very long career if I didn't change that.'

Of course, the pandemic has made mincemeat of all that strategic thinking. '*The Valkyrie* was supposed to happen ages ago, but Covid meant it got pushed back.

On the other hand, he's more cautious about doing more Wagner. 'Those heavy tenor roles seem like Duke of Edinburgh Awards – blinking at you, daring you to try them,' he says. 'But I have no desire to go on to Siegfried or Tristan or anything like that. I want to sing lyrical music.'

What will be the challenges of singing Samson in Saint-Saëns's opera? 'You mean, apart from the thought that I might have to take my top off?' he laughs. 'In fact, I know I will have to. Also I am rather follicly challenged for the role. I must be the baldest tenor who has ever sung Samson.

Simply smokin': Nicky Spence as wastrel Števa Buryja in *Jenůfa*, as staged by English National Opera 2016; (below) its composer, Leoš Janáček

But I am really looking forward to working with Elīna Garanča, who is Dalila. She has such intensity.' When Garanča did *Carmen* at the Royal Opera, I observe, she looked as if she was going to eat Don José alive. 'I know,' cries Spence. 'One of her five a day.'

With recordings of Vaughan Williams's *On Wenlock Edge*, Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito* (with Spence in the title role) and Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin* also due for release in the coming months, 2022 promises to be a bumper year. But the project that will bring him most attention, one suspects, is his role as a mentor in Sky Arts's forthcoming series *Anyone Can Sing*. The programme is based on the premise that 'absolutely anyone can hold a tune' and promises to show us a transformation from someone 'screeching in the shower to singing like a real soprano'.

Really? Can anyone sing? Spence seems to think so. 'The programme is a lot like *The Great British Bake Off* and *The Great British Sewing Bee*,' he says. 'We got six members of the public who have never sung, or who have been traumatised by the thought of singing, and we have taken them on a journey to try to change their feelings about singing. Some were told they would never sing in their lives, or were told to shut up when they were six, or told to mouth along to the words when other people sang. So these amazing people had a 12-week period where they got lessons from me once a week, and at the end they got to sing at ENO.'

And the tuition worked? 'We haven't found the next Maria Callas or Pavarotti,' Spence says. 'But yes, it's been like therapy for them to feel that they can now sing. And they can! It's been quite a leap. I don't believe anyone is tone deaf, but they were very adrift from melody before.

'And I loved it too. I really enjoy teaching. During lockdown I did a lot of mentoring young tenors, but working with these complete amateurs from ground zero upwards was a real challenge and very humbling. And although doing a few workshops is not going to give them a new career, I think it has helped some of them to conquer difficulties in their own lives.'

Has Spence had any adverse reaction from his colleagues about the notion of creating 'instant singers'? After all, real opera singers have had years of training. 'I'm sure there will be!' he laughs. 'But I hope colleagues will see that this is a warm, well-intentioned series and that we aren't trying to find instant opera singers. It's more about unpacking opera itself, showing people what it really takes to be an opera singer. You have to be a dancer, an athlete, a mathematician if the music's very contemporary and hard – there are so many skills beyond actual singing. I don't think many people have any idea, and maybe that's one reason why they don't come to opera. So I think the series will be good news for opera generally.'

Before all that hits the screens, however, Spence will hopefully have recovered from what he calls 'the most nerve-wracking show I've ever done'. On New Year's Day, he married his partner, in music and in life – the pianist Dylan Perez. Was it a very operatic occasion? 'Definitely not,' he says. 'I refused to get any famous singer friends to sing, because I have had to sing at so many friends' weddings when basically I just wanted to get drunk. So I decided I wouldn't do that to anybody. Instead, there was folk music and of course a wild ceilidh.' You can take the boy out of Dumfries, but you can't take Dumfries out of the boy.

ARENA PAL, JOHN MILLAR, GETTY

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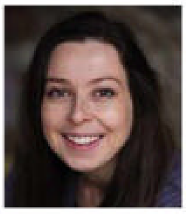
> I started to notice the huge difference yoga made to my clarinet playing. My breathing got much better

THE BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE INTERVIEW

Annelien Van Wauwe



The Belgian clarinettist's love of yoga is the inspiration for a new album of Mozart and Henderickx, recorded just days before the birth of her son, as she tells **Kate Wakeling**

PHOTOGRAPHY: JOELLE VAN AUTREVE

'There's this huge cliché that people think you just sit on a mat, say "om" and forget about everything, but a huge part of yoga is actually about life force,' explains the clarinettist Annelien Van Wauwe. Life force is certainly not something this dynamic musician is short of. A sought-after concerto soloist and former BBC New Generation Artist, Van Wauwe also runs two acclaimed chamber ensembles and is the recipient of numerous accolades, including the prestigious Opus Klassik Award for best young artist in 2020. But the way she 'keeps two feet on the floor' is through a decade's experience of yoga, something her new album *Flow* explores to beautiful effect.

Born in Hamme, Belgium, Van Wauwe wasn't brought up in a musical family – her father was a lawyer and her mother a writer. But her aptitude was soon clear ('apparently I was always singing to myself'), so her parents sent her to music school where her talent quickly blossomed. Van Wauwe laughs that her attraction to the clarinet as a child was largely down to its appearance: 'I just liked how it looked, the silvery keys especially.' Now the instrument feels special to her because 'you can copy your own voice. That has always been my approach, at first unconsciously and now very consciously. Whatever you feel inside, you can express through your voice, and the clarinet can imitate that.'

Nurturing the connection between one's inner life, physicality and creative expression is key to Van Wauwe's music making, not least through the links she has discovered between clarinet playing and yoga practice. She first encountered yoga while studying at the Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler Berlin: 'The conservatory offered all kinds of physical courses like Alexander technique and yoga, and I tried the whole range.' She soon realised that there were special benefits to combining her rigorous practice

Striking a pose: (left) yoga guru BKS Iyengar performs stretches while Yehudi Menuhin (centre) and David Attenborough discuss BBC television special *Yehudi Menuhin and His Guru*, 1963

And breathe...

Musicians and yoga

Annelien Van Wauwe is not the first musician to extol the benefits of yoga. Most famously, violinist **Yehudi Menuhin** took to the ancient Indian discipline upon visiting the country in 1952 at the age of 36, where he first met the sitar virtuoso Ravi Shankar. At the time Menuhin was suffering from severe muscular tension, but his first lesson with BKS Iyengar led to a lifelong dedication to the practice – and to Iyengar's introduction to students, including cellist **Jacqueline du Pré**, in the UK, France and Switzerland. While in India on that 1952 trip, Menuhin dined with the prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru and demonstrated his newly acquired yoga skills by standing on his head.

Various composers have also felt an affinity with the practice and its mystical associations, including **Alexander Scriabin**, whose unfinished *Mysterium* was influenced by Sanskrit and yoga studies, and **Gustav Holst**, whose interests included meditation and Hinduism.

More recently, **Philip Glass** has spoken of the importance of breathing and mediation for musicians, following his introduction to yoga aged 20 in 1957. At the time, the New York-based composer had only vaguely heard of the practice, but found an instructor by looking under 'Y' in the telephone book. Glass now credits that first tutor not only for instilling in him the physical discipline needed to maintain his long career, but also for his introduction to vegetarianism, which he has kept up for over 60 years.

schedule with yoga: 'I started to notice the huge difference it made to my clarinet playing. My breathing got better, my air support – all the things that clarinet teachers try to explain using complicated words – but through yoga you start to feel this body consciousness for yourself.'

Flow, Van Wauwe's new album recorded with the NDR Radiophilharmonie and conducted by Andrew Manze, offers a summation of this holistic approach to the clarinet. Released on 31 March on Pentatone, the disc pairs Mozart's Clarinet Concerto with a substantial new work, *Sutra,* by Flemish composer Wim Henderickx – a co-commission by the Borletti-Buitoni Trust and BBC Radio 3 for solo clarinet, orchestra and electronics, exploring the principles of yoga.

Aptly enough, Van Wauwe had the idea for *Sutra* during a yoga class: 'I was resting at the end of a session and there was music playing – some beautiful mantras. There was something about listening to this while the body slowed down that felt very special. I thought, "Wow, we need a new piece!"' It didn't take Van Wauwe long to decide that Henderickx was the right composer for the task. Well known for his works drawing on Eastern philosophies, including his substantial *Tantric Cycle* (2004-2010), Henderickx has often incorporated other art forms into his music, and his works share an affinity with Ligeti, not least in their use of complex polyrhythms and innovative musical textures.

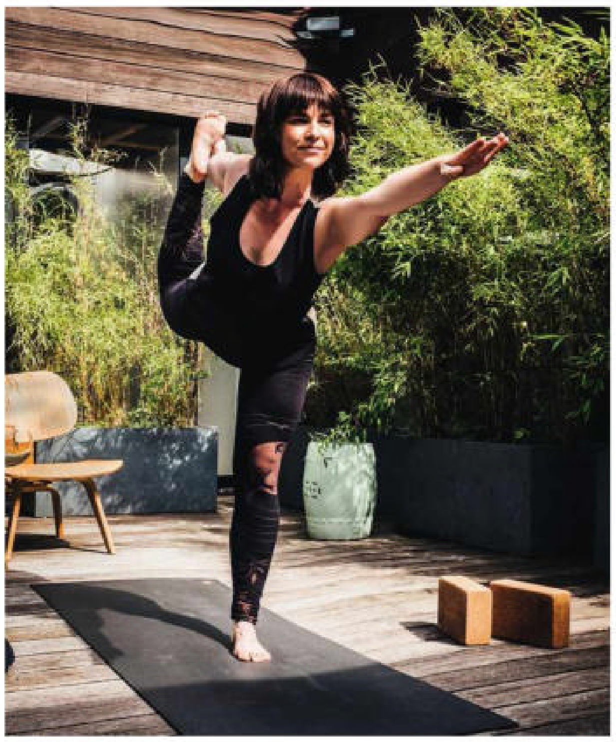
Sutra is inspired by the *Yoga Sutras of Patañjali*, a collection of some 200 short texts on the theory and practice of yoga dating from the early centuries CE. Van Wauwe selected four Sutras ('threads') from the collection, which Henderickx in turn used to shape and colour his composition's four movements, and the resulting score is by turns luminously meditative and ferociously energetic. The work manages to circumvent some of the thornier questions of musical appropriation by exploring these yogic principles through Western contemporary classical idioms rather than an Orientalist 'recreation' of Indian sound worlds. *Sutra* is also a far cry from Western 'new age' background music. 'I wasn't looking for a piece of 15-minute background music for a meditation session,' confirms Van Wauwe.

Star quality: Van Wauwe receives her 2020 Opus Klassik award; (top right) demonstrating her flexibility in yoga exercises

'The first movement, "Pranayama", is all about the breath waking up, so after a quiet introduction the score has these explosive outbursts – and then the third movement is also extremely rhythmic. At points it feels like playing *The Rite of Spring.*'

As well as being virtuosically demanding for both soloist and ensemble, the score (at Van Wauwe's request) requires each player to breathe audibly and chant in Sanskrit. It took a little while, she recalls, for the orchestra to warm up to this idea: 'When we did the recording, I played from the middle of the woodwind section, so I could hear them saying, "Gosh, prana–what? How do you pronounce that?" It was a bit awkward, but I had to sing in the piece too, and I felt the orchestra start to think, "This is our soloist but she's also a human being." Everyone began to loosen up and, by the end, the orchestral musicians had become very convincing mantra speakers.'

Van Wauwe talks warmly of how her yoga practice also shaped her approach to learning *Sutra*, not least as she began working on it when already six months pregnant and, somewhat staggeringly,



in gorgeously tailored, vividly coordinated outfits from top to toe: 'I don't really know where it came from that musicians are supposed to wear black and white, or the same clothes you see in *Downton Abbey* – especially if you want to attract younger audiences. The sound my ensembles make isn't black and white; it's all the colours! So, I told the players we wouldn't wear black and white, not even socks. And somehow I ended up ordering colourful socks for everybody. That's the perfectionist in me.'

In turn, the energy and drive that Van Wauwe brings to every side of her career is inspiring. 'People say I'm organised, but I only do what I love. I wouldn't be happy if I didn't have enough variation.' In the face of Covid lockdowns, she has arranged numerous streamed performances for her ensembles, recorded a hit series of YouTube yoga-inspired warm-up videos for clarinettists, and 'I kept practising. I missed the connection to the audience, but this wasn't a reason to stop playing.'

finished recording the piece just four days before her son was born. 'It was crazy, but I think that made it even more special because I couldn't practise for hours a day. I had to work with my body, so the piece became a kind of companion throughout the last three months of the pregnancy. Every day I'd think: "OK, good morning! How are we going to do this?" If I had a moment to play, I was forced to use as little energy as possible to really get it right.'

Van Wauwe performs both *Sutra* and the Mozart on the basset clarinet – similar to the standard B flat clarinet, but with additional keys that allow it to play extra lower notes. The basset clarinet is closely associated with Anton Stadler, the virtuoso for whom Mozart's Clarinet Concerto was composed. Van Wauwe is thrilled Henderickx scored *Sutra* for the basset clarinet too: 'I think it is so important to have more pieces for the instrument – and, of course, it's a connector to the Mozart. I really like that we have the old and the very modern on one album.'

Van Wauwe's lyrical interpretation of the Mozart conveys both effortless elegance

MONIQUE WÜSTENHAGEN, CARMEN DE VOS, GETTY

'The sound my ensembles make isn't black and white; it's all the colours'

and emotional depth, and the concerto's blend of simplicity and complexity strongly appeals to her: 'It's the concerto you grow up with as a clarinettist, so I always used to think, "Oh my goodness, soloists who play it for their entire life surely get bored of it!" But actually, it's the opposite. It's such a challenging piece because you can always go further in terms of detail – it invites a perfectionist approach. There's not one note that doesn't have a meaning.'

Van Wauwe takes this 'perfectionist approach' into every aspect of her professional life. As the founder of the Brussels-based Carousel chamber ensemble and Breeze quintet, she has considered all facets of their concert presentation, and both groups now perform

Yoga has been vital in helping her 'keep connected, at least to myself' despite the world turning upside down, and working on *Sutra* 'was like a light'. Indeed, while Van Wauwe is a warmly down-to-earth in person, she wonders about the almost mystic good fortune that allowed *Flow* to be recorded amid numerous challenges. 'We had to change so many dates, and when we came to the last part of the recording, it was the very last chance – both for me in terms of the pregnancy but also for the orchestra. Two days after we finished recording there was a lockdown in Germany. I'm not very spiritual, but I thought, "This cannot be a coincidence." Somehow it all just fell into place.'

Trains *of* thought

Almost from the moment the first tracks were laid, composers have been inspired by the railways to produce train-related works, says Julia Winterson

When the Stockton & Darlington Railway opened in 1825, it was the first steam-powered railway to carry passengers. Since then there has been no shortage of music connected with trains and railways: orchestral pieces and popular songs describing railway journeys; those that celebrate the opening of a new line; worksongs and blues outlining the hardship of building the railroads; even the first instance of sampled music using railway sounds as its source.

found, from the *The Little Train of the Caipira* by Villa-Lobos to Duke Ellington's *Daybreak Express*.

Across Europe in the 19th century, the opening of new lines was celebrated in music, including two of the most well-known railway pieces, the famous *Eisenbahn-Lust-Walzer* ('Railway Pleasure Waltzes') by Johann Strauss I which was composed in advance of the much anticipated 1837 opening of the line between Floridsdorf and Deutsch Wagram in Austria, and Lumbye's *Copenhagen Steam Railway Galop*, written in 1847 to celebrate the opening of the line from Copenhagen to Roskilde. Both pieces are a musical depiction of a railway journey.

> The shriek of the whistle and the clattering track rhythms are so easily recognisable and adaptable

So what is the appeal that has attracted so many musicians? Is it the relationship with time where the train moving through the landscape speaks of the physical and metaphorical power of the railway to connect people and places? Or is it simply the attraction of the evocative sounds, the roaring and wheezing of the steam train, the shriek of the whistle and the clattering track rhythms that are so easily recognisable and adaptable to change? The sometimes laboured departure of a steam engine can be performed as a slow introduction, building up to a quicker development then slowing down to a halt as the passengers reach the end of their journey. It is an easy model for composers to follow and there are many examples of this blueprint to be

In Strauss's *Eisenbahn-Lust-Walzer* much of the waltz music uses an 'oom-cha-cha' accompaniment, a rhythm which lends itself to the sound of a train chugging along, a machine-like sound underlying a slow-moving melody. The evocation of the train is also heard in the French horns, representing the sound of the train's whistle. Lumbye's score abounds with special effects: towards the end of the Introduction, the percussion section includes a train bell and a railway whistle; 12 strikes of the train bell cut across a calm cello melody

Hurtling towards the future: Arthur Honegger, composer of *Pacific 231*, visits a London North Eastern Railway steam train in 1927; (above left) Johann Strauss I, whose *Eisenbahn-Lust-Walzer* celebrated the opening of a new line

GETTY

Ode to the past: (above) Flanders and Swann, composers of *Slow Train*; and (left) Woolacombe & Mortehoe station, which is mentioned in the lyrics

followed by five hoots on the train whistle and the music moves into a faster section; as the train starts to pick up speed, the instruments chosen to imitate the train's rhythmic chugging are 'sandpaper block plus springs plus bass drum'; towards the end, we hear a conductor's whistle signalling the end of the journey.

For some time, the train was seen as the epitome of modernity. In the early 20th century, the Futurist movement sought to express this in mechanical imagery. One of the most well-known orchestral train pieces, Arthur Honegger's *Pacific 231* (1923), was created in this spirit. The number 231 refers to a steam locomotive with two front axles, three main axles and one axle at the back. The hard-edged sounds evoke raw power as the train starts to move, gains speed and then races with a sense of inexorable machine-driven motion. In Honegger's own words, 'It shows the tranquil breathing of the engine in repose, the effort of starting [and] the progressive gathering of speed … of a train of 300 tons hurling itself through the night at 120 miles an hour'.

The 'tranquil breathing of the engine' is portrayed by the slow chordal opening. With trills in the double basses, the remaining strings play with the bow near the bridge of the instrument producing a glassy, almost ghostly, tone evoking the sound of steam escaping.

Staying on track
Well trained composers

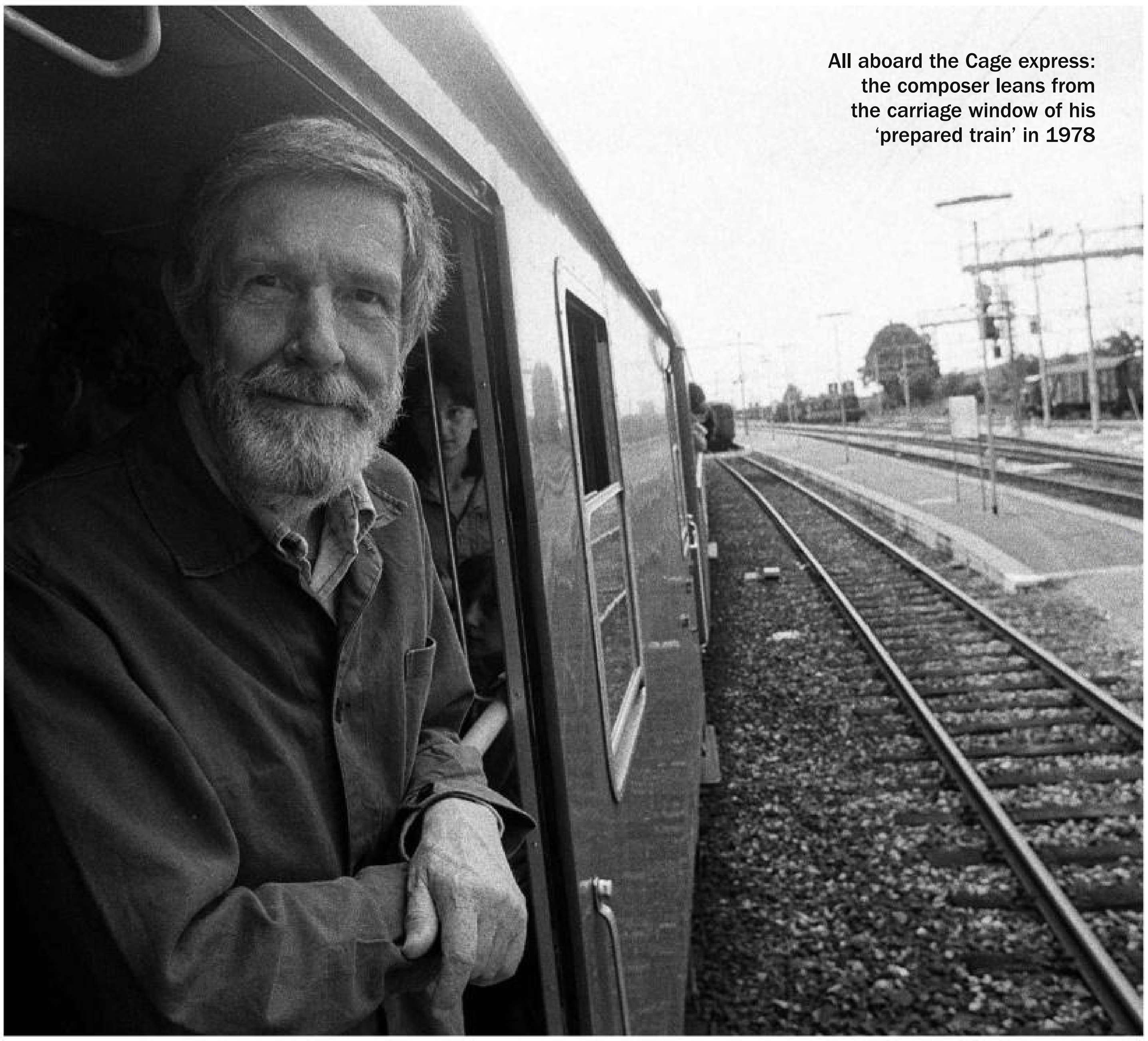
A major railway enthusiast from boyhood, **Antonín Dvorák** spent much of his adult life in Prague's Franz Jozef I central station. There, he would chat to drivers about the latest locomotive technology and make extensive notes.

Following a crisis of confidence in the early 1870s, Russian composer **Mily Balakirev** took up a job as a clerk on the Warsaw line of the Central Railway Company to make ends meet and withdrew himself almost entirely from music for a couple of years.

Remarkably, **Herbert Howells**'s 1919 carol anthem *A Spotless Rose* was inspired by trains. 'I sat down and wrote [it] after idly watching some shunting from the window of a cottage which overlooked the Midland Railway,' he described.

Pity the poor passenger who, in October 1880, went to light a cigar on a train to Mulhouse, only to be stopped by a revolver-wielding **Hans Rott** (above). The Austrian composer's reasoning was that Brahms had laced the carriage with dynamite. Rott was later committed to an asylum.

Stations named after composers include **Gare d'Auber** in Paris, **Stanisław Moniuszko Central Station** in Warsaw and, since 1998, **Mendelssohn-Bartholdy-Park** station on Berlin's U-Bahn.



All aboard the Cage express: the composer leans from the carriage window of his 'prepared train' in 1978

The 'effort of starting' with the great weight of the engine is suggested by the cumbersome block chords played by the low instruments followed by an insistent, accelerating rhythm with the stridency of the orchestra increasing as the music gathers momentum. At length, everything comes together in raucous loud chords with the brakes applied as the music shudders to a halt.

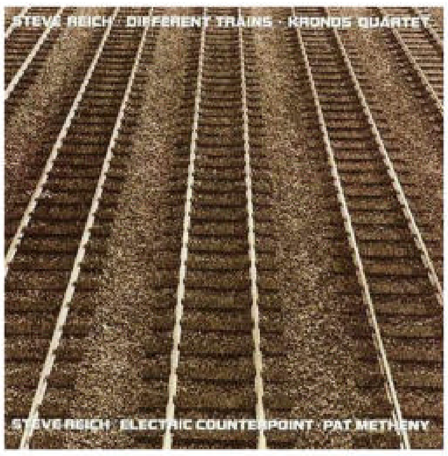
As the 20th century moved on, this perception of modernity faded and instead steam trains were sometimes used as a symbol of nostalgia in, for example, the Flanders and Swann song *Slow Train* (1963). Swathes of the rail network in the UK were closed as a result of recommendations made in two reports by Richard Beeching. Flanders and Swann's melancholic song is a paean to the imminent closure of many small stations. An elegiac list of bucolic place names is intoned over a simple lilting piano accompaniment – Blandford Forum, Buttermere, Midsomer Norton and Tumby Woodside – pondering the unhurried delights of a slow train.

The relationship between composers and trains wasn't always happy. Rossini, for one, hated them. This was probably a reaction to a catastrophic journey from Antwerp to Brussels in 1836 where he was so unnerved by the experience that he fainted, was ill for several days afterwards and swore that he would never set foot on a train again. Nevertheless, this did not prevent him from writing his piano piece *Un petit train de plaisir comico-imitatif* ('A little train of pleasure') which translates a terrible train journey into sound along with a satirical running commentary written on the score. Similarly, the composer Percy Grainger wrote *Train Music* as a response to a journey in 'a very jerky train going from Genoa to San Remo'. It is characterised by frequent changes of time signature and big percussive chords.

Those musicians who loved trains, however, are to be found more frequently. The American Charles Ives enjoyed his two-hour daily commute and it was one of these journeys which inspired his piece *From Hanover Square North, at the End of a Tragic Day, the Voice of the People Again Arose* recalling his experience of communal singing at the station the day that the news broke of the sinking of the *RMS Lusitania*.

When Britten was working on the film *Night Mail* (1936) he enjoyed spending evenings at Harrow station listening to the trains arriving and departing. Britten collaborated with WH Auden on *Night Mail*, a marriage of film,

Sirens and whistles: (far right) Pat Keely's poster for *Night Mail*, which featured music by (below) Benjamin Britten; (right) Steve Reich's *Different Trains*



music and poetry which is still regarded by many as unsurpassed in its genre. Commissioned by the GPO Film Unit, it tracks the journey of a Postal Special train from London to Glasgow, documenting an everyday shift. The filming team travelled to Crewe where trolley loads of mail came in from all over the country. These were loaded onto the train and then dropped off through the night as the train travelled up to Scotland. In his Title Music and End Sequence Britten famously composed music that, along with Auden's verse, captured the rhythms of a train.

The Title Music opens with a roll on the side drum followed by a short, loud fanfare. The percussion section imitates the sound of a train setting off, with thuds on the bass drum which gradually become more frequent until the train sounds settle into a regular rhythm. Soon the sound dies away, making way for the voiceover commentary. Roughly half way through the film there is a Percussion Sequence where special effects are produced with 'found objects' including steam (compressed air), sandpaper on slate, siren, whistle and coal falling down a shaft. The End Sequence opens with a wind machine and a muted side drum imitating the sounds of a train setting off. Once the stuttering train has fallen into a steady rhythm, the speaker enters with the famous words 'This is the night mail crossing the border' accompanied by a side drum used to denote the propelling forward motion.

Railway pieces have also been groundbreaking in their own way, as in the following three examples. *Etude aux chemins de fer* (1948) is a collage of sampled train sounds recorded at Batignolles station in Paris by the French composer and electronics engineer Pierre Schaeffer. It opens with the sound of a distorted train whistle followed by a succession of loops of the six engines chugging, slowed down, speeded up, superimposed, changing in volume, and all punctuated by transformed whistle sounds. It is arguably the first piece of music to use sampling.

And sampling is central to Steve Reich's emotionally intense piece for string quartet and tape, *Different Trains* (1988). Reich writes in his programme note that as a child, because his parents had separated, he frequently travelled between New York and Los Angeles. Looking back, he thought that if he had been in Europe during this WWII period, as a Jew he would have had to ride very different trains, trains travelling to the concentration camps. *Different Trains* is based on samples of spoken phrases focussing on the personal histories of five individuals: his governess, a retired Pullman porter, and three Holocaust survivors – Rachella, Paul and Rachel – speaking of their experiences. Reich also collected and manipulated recordings of steam train sounds, screeching brakes, sirens, whistles and bells which were sampled and edited, and incorporated into the scheme of the music, adding a further emotional and ever-urgent intensity.

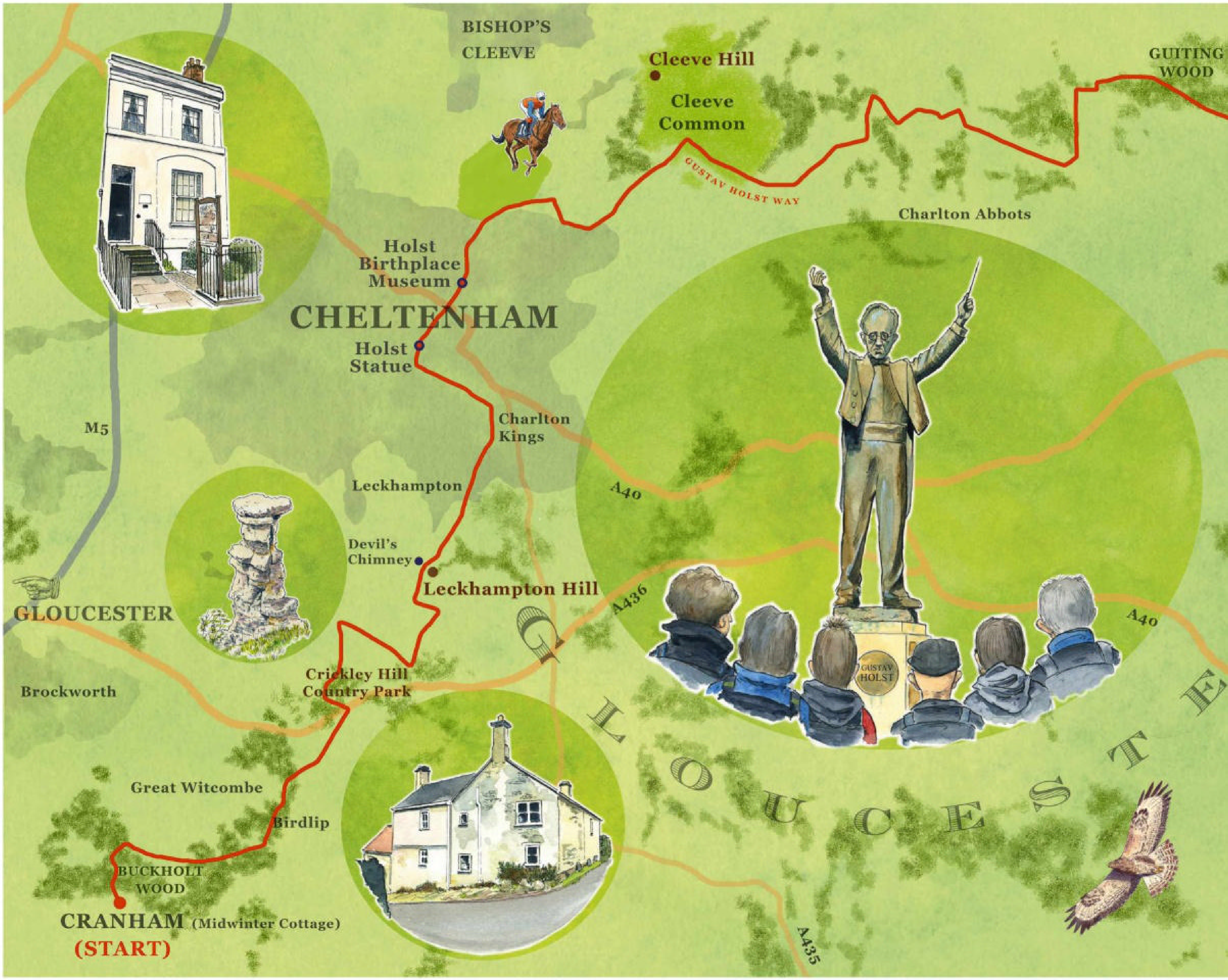
GETTY, BRIDGEMAN

'Finally, when the train comes to a complete stop, we will hear the sounds of the station at night: empty and calm'

In many railway pieces, the connection between the music and the train lies in the recreation of the latter's rhythmic sounds. Cage's piece *Alla Ricerca del Silenzio Perduto* (*Il Treno*, for short) is different. It is more about the atmosphere of the journey, an invitation to be aware of the sounds that are all around us. It first took place in 1978, a three-day event beginning at Bologna Centrale Station. A stopping train filled with passengers, musicians and electronic music equipment embarked on its journey making stops at designated towns. Passengers were greeted at the station by bands and dancers, and cassette recorders played unexpected sounds in random corners.

How did the event end? Italian newspaper *l'Unità* reported: 'The trip will be accompanied by the sound of the train only. Finally, when the train comes to a complete stop, we will hear the sounds of the station at night: empty and calm; and we will find the Lost Silence.'

Julia Winterson's 'Railways and Music' is published by University of Huddersfield Press



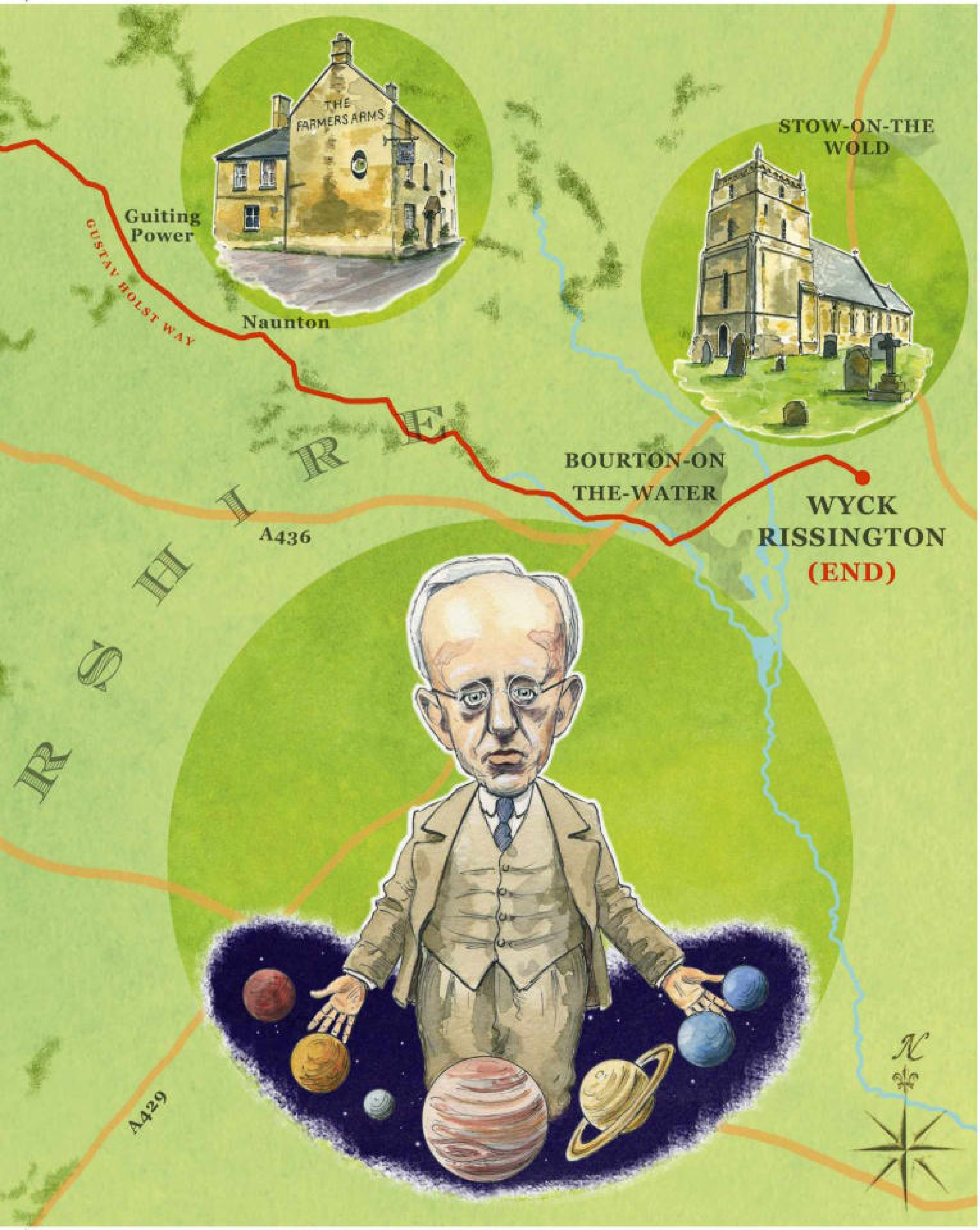
A Walk with Holst

Jeremy Pound and five friends follow in the footsteps of the countryside-loving composer as they spend a weekend on the Gustav Holst Way

ILLUSTRATION: JONTY CLARK

In August 1927, Gustav Holst received an invitation to have lunch with author Thomas Hardy, to whom he had recently dedicated his orchestral work *Egdon Heath*. Taking the train as far as Bristol, the composer then walked the rest of the way to Hardy's house – in Dorchester, more than 60 miles away.

That was fairly typical, as Holst walked everywhere: up and down hills with friends such as Vaughan Williams; to and from work;



on holiday in north Africa; all the way from Gloucestershire to London. This was partly due to being penniless, partly for the good of his health, but largely out of sheer enjoyment.

What better way to honour his memory, then, than the Gustav Holst Way, a walking trail across the Cotswolds that was officially marked out in 2011? Beginning in the village of Cranham, it makes its way past Holst's birthplace in Cheltenham before heading eastwards towards another village, Wyck Rissington.

If a 53-year-old Holst can manage a 60-mile walk to Dorchester, then a gaggle of six 40- and 50-somethings can surely cope with 36 miles of Gustav Holst Way. I invite five friends to do just that. And, while none of my fellow walkers are hugely into classical music, this is my opportunity to try and change that. Bringing a portable speaker with me, I'll be treating them to examples of Holst's music as we walk. Hopefully, a combination of the great man's genius and the glorious Gloucestershire scenery will inspire them to explore further...

Starting out: (above) the Gustav Holst Way begins; (top) Midwinter Cottage; (left) Holst and Vaughan Williams in The Malverns, 1921

Saturday 2 October, 8am

Here we are then, on the edge of Cranham on an ominously grey Saturday morning. Walking boots on, rucksacks packed, we're outside the 14th-century church of St James the Great, where Holst's mother, Clara, used to play the harmonium and arrange the flowers. If you nip inside, you can find a kneeler adorned with an embroidery of her son's music.

I wonder if pop singer Lily Allen knew all this when, ten years ago, famous faces gathered in the church for her wedding? A glamorous occasion, for sure, but Allen's connection with St James the Great was a fleeting one. In contrast, our musical hero still has a presence here – on the churchyard wall, a little green sign with the silhouette of Holst's face on it tells us that this is the start of the Gustav Holst Way.

8.10am: 'So,' I ask the chaps as we set off, 'what is Holst's most famous piece?' Five different voices tell me that it's *The Planets*. I, however, would like to make an alternative suggestion. Early October it may be, but 'In the Bleak Midwinter' is soon emerging from our natty little speaker. Holst composed his much-loved setting to Christina Rossetti's words while staying in Cranham in 1906, in a house that is today named Midwinter Cottage. With the name painted in unboastful letters on the front gate, the cottage is very easy to miss – which is exactly what we do, and have to double back on ourselves to take a photo. The sky above us, meanwhile, is itself looking increasingly gloomy.

18+

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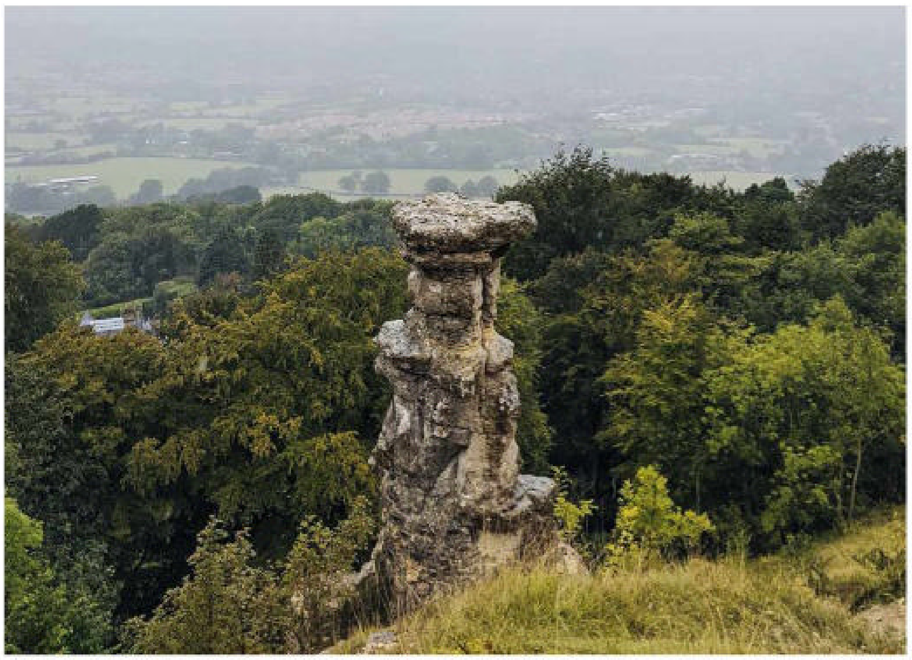
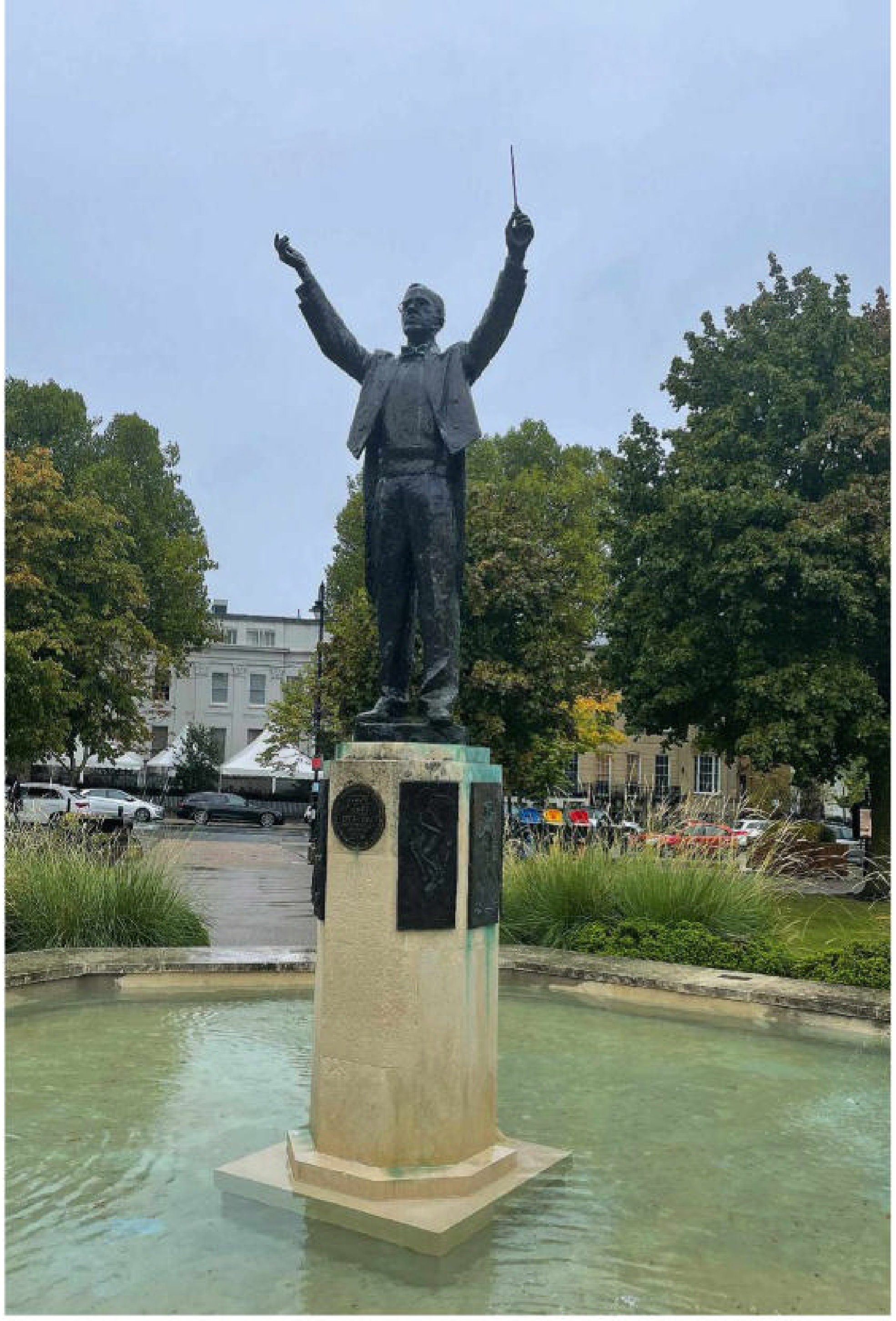




9.10am: 'In the Bleak Midwinter' aside, our listening today is going to consist of *The Planets*. Just for fun, each of us has been allotted his own Planet, with names picked out of a hat. I'm delighted to have drawn 'Uranus, the Magician', as it's my favourite movement from Holst's suite. Alastair, who is usually to be found haring around on a bike, is ideally suited to 'Mercury, the Winged Messenger', as is the cerebral and diplomatic Chris to 'Venus, the Bringer of Peace'. Greg seems pleased with 'Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity', Stuart and Paul less so with, respectively, 'Mars, the Bringer of War' and 'Saturn, the Bringer of Old Age'.

I explain that, tempting though it is to imagine Holst peering at the night sky through a telescope, his interest in planets had little to with astronomy. Instead, astrology was his bag – hence the character descriptions attached to each of the movements. Of course, there are seven movements in *The Planets* but only six of us. Maybe we will encounter our 'Neptune, the Mystic' along the way?

9.15am: Time to play our first *Planet*: 'Mars'. I doubt that Holst ever pictured his poundingly aggressive music accompanying the sight of six middle-aged men trooping through wet woodland, but it suits the scene rather well. Stuart and Greg pick up on the music's filmic quality and the influence he had on the likes of John Williams and others. If only Holst had lived in the era of blockbuster movies, I doubt his piggy bank would have been so empty.

10.30am: With a few miles now under our increasingly muddy boots, it's time to stop for a bite to eat. If we are to remain true to Holstian character, we ought to avoid meat – partly for financial reasons, partly on principle, he was a vegetarian. The cheese and onion pasties at the Crickley Hill Café do look nice but, alas, they only have four left. Stuart and I therefore have to make do with a bacon sandwich. Sorry, Gustav.

12pm: Thankfully, my speaker is waterproof. This is handy, as 'Venus' and then 'Mercury' are joined by the sound of heavy rain. As we walk along the top of Leckhampton Hill past the local landmark that is the Devil's Chimney, the views northwards over Cheltenham and beyond should be rather special. In this weather, however, our appetite for admiring the scenery is a little less than it would normally be.

I doubt that Holst ever pictured 'Mars' accompanying the sight of six middle-aged men trooping through wet woodland

Pounding the way: (clockwise from far left) our deputy editor and friends reach Cheltenham Racecourse; the Gustav Holst Memorial Fountain; admiring Holst's own piano; Holst's birthplace; a very wet Devil's Chimney

1pm: Six sodden walkers arrive in Cheltenham's Imperial Gardens and cluster round the Gustav Holst Memorial Fountain. In the centre of the fountain, which was unveiled by conductor Mark Elder in 2008, is a statue of the right-handed Holst holding his baton in his left hand. He had to conduct this way, as he suffered from neuritis in his right arm, an affliction that also scuppered any hopes of being a concert pianist.

2pm: At the very heart of our walk is the Holst Victorian House at 4 Clarence Road, where we pitch up at after a bit of lunch. Known until recently as the Holst Birthplace Museum, this is where Clara and Adolph von Holst welcomed their son into the world on 21 September 1874. Today, the house is preserved in a manner similar to how he himself would have known it and, over four floors, contains various Holstian artefacts including the Collard and Collard piano on which he composed *The Planets*.

After watching a brief film about the house and its famous former residents, we take a wander around. I hover by the piano looking hopefully towards a guide before summoning up the courage: 'Can I play it?' To my surprise, I'm given permission to subject the poor beast to a thumpy rendition of 'I Vow to Thee, My Country'. Holst must be spinning in his grave, I reckon. It's made me happy, though.

As we round off the visit with a group photo round the piano, I can't help but notice that the score lying open on the music stand is the two-piano version of 'Neptune, the Mystic'. Ha. I knew he would join us at some point.

2.45pm: Incidentally, if anyone ever tries to tell you – in, say, a quiz – that Holst was born at 4 Clarence Road, Cheltenham, you may point out that they are wrong. At the time of his birth, the road was called Pittville Terrace.

3.15pm: 'Jupiter' lifts our spirits as our route out of town takes us alongside Cheltenham Racecourse, home of the famous annual Gold Cup. Racing was already a big thing in Cheltenham in Holst's time but, unlike horse-mad Elgar, there's little evidence of him taking any interest in it. Google does tell me that there is currently an Irish race horse called Gustav Holst. You won't see him here – he runs on the flat, while Cheltenham races are mainly over fences.

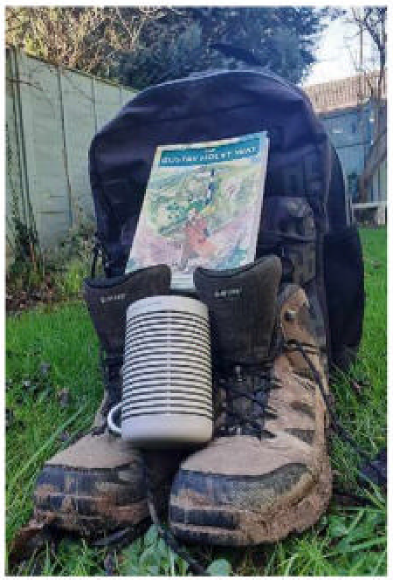
4pm: The final half hour of our walking day is also the toughest. With three radio masts at its top, Cleeve Hill, our stopping point for today, is visible for miles around, but as we trudge up its steep slope, those masts never seem to get any closer. I have only recently reached my half-century, but I am now feeling every one of my 50 years. I cast Paul, our 'Saturn, the Bringer of Old Age', an accusing glance as I play his movement (Holst's own favourite, by the way). We're cold, we're wet, we're exhausted. A bath and a beer cannot come quickly enough.

Sunday 3 October, 8am

Well, what a difference a few hours makes. As we reconvene on Cleeve Hill for Day 2 of our walk, the sun is shining. Hurray! Today, we are heading eastwards on the part of the Gustav Holst Way that, to some extent, would have been familiar to the composer himself – as a 17-year-old, he walked regularly from Cheltenham to St Laurence's Church in Wyck Rissington where he held the post of organist, his first ever professional engagement. And what better way to launch the day than by listening to 'Uranus' and 'Neptune', our last two *Planets*?

9am: As we stop briefly at Belas Knap, a Neolithic long barrow, I'm reminded that those hunting round these parts for Holst's grave will be disappointed – there was no final homecoming for Cheltenham's famous son. When he died on 25 May 1934, he was buried 100 miles away at Chichester Cathedral, close to John Weelkes, his favourite Tudor composer.

10am: The Cotswolds is, famously, mainly sheep country, though the region does also have its fair share of cows, some handsome examples of which we are now walking past. Composer Herbert Howells liked to tell how Holst once



Gustav must-haves

According to the Ramblers Association, the Gustav Holst Way is of 'moderate' difficulty – one or two hills along the way, but nothing too arduous. Nonetheless, even in summer there are enough boggy paths to make a pair of sturdy walking boots highly recommended. Though the Way is marked by green signs, it's a good idea not to rely on them entirely. For an easy-to-follow guide to the route, complete with descriptions of the main points of interest, go for Frank Partridge's *The Gustav Holst Way* (2014; Reardon Publishing). Whether, or how, you choose to listen to music as you walk is up to you!

Cattle do nicely: (clockwise) the local livestock ignores the Cotswolds view; St Laurence's Church, Wyck Rissington; journey's end; a well-earned pint

took his trombone out on a walk and practised it too close to a herd, scaring the bejeezus out of them and earning an ear-bashing from the farmer. No musical ear, these cows. Holst was in fact a fine trombonist and wrote superb orchestral parts for the instrument. To prove my point, I play a moment from *The Perfect Fool*.

11am: T-shirt weather in October? Yep. And thus the perfect moment to play *Beni Mora*, Holst's orchestral suite inspired by music he heard while on a walking holiday in sun-baked Algeria in 1908. In the third movement, I point out, the same eight-note theme on the flute is repeated 163 times, pre-empting the Minimalist technique by 50 years or so. Not just a brilliant composer, Holst was groundbreaking too.

12.30pm: As our 'Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity', Greg has been instructed to keep a tally of the number of pubs we pass along our route. The Farmers Arms in Guiting Power is the tenth, and is clearly crying out for a visit. Once again, I'm not sure we'd have had Gustav's approval, as he was mostly teetotal. Too bad. And cheers!

3.30pm: The final leg of our walk has taken us along the River Windrush and through the picture-postcard village of Bourton-on-the-Water. Since we are nearing the easternmost point of the journey, I play one more piece: the *Japanese Suite*. Though every work I've played over the weekend has been orchestral, Holst did of course write much besides, from piano music to operas. We'll just have to investigate them over another walk at some point in the future.

The pub in Guiting Power is clearly crying out for a visit, though I'm not sure we'd have had the teetotal Gustav's approval

4.45pm: And at last we arrive in the beautiful village of Wyck Rissington, in equally lovely evening sun. Theoretically, we should have been here half an hour ago as St Laurence's Church shuts at 4.30pm, but some kind soul has left it open for us. Our holy grail is the organ, above which a brass plaque tells us that this is where Gustav Holst once plied his trade. In this instance, I'm not tempted to have a play, but simply enjoy the satisfaction of having got here. And anyway, the organ's locked.

5pm: After 36 miles, we have scarcely any feeling in our legs, but as we linger for a few minutes in the churchyard, we reflect that it's been a fun little jaunt. And have my friends found themselves inspired, as I'd hoped, by Holst's brilliance as a composer? Well, sauntering over towards the car to take us home, I hear Chris happily humming 'Jupiter' to himself. Job done, I reckon.

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Days of devastation: Cavehill Road Shopping Centre on 'Bloody Friday', whose victims included young horn player Stephen Parker; (below left) Victoria College Choir in front of the school hall, 1971, with Clare Stevens seated front row (circled)

Troubled times

Clare Stevens recalls how her generation coped with an ever-present threat as they studied and performed classical music during the Troubles in 1970s Belfast

Last November, a BBC Radio 3 broadcast by the BBC Singers celebrated 60 years of 'Let the Peoples Sing', the European Broadcasting Union's competition for amateur choirs from across the continent. Listening to it brought back vivid memories for me, as I had competed in it in the early 1970s. The circumstances in which I and my fellow pupils at Victoria College, Belfast took part were, however, anything but ordinary.

Our recording session for the 1971 competition was particularly memorable. We were excused from afternoon lessons in order to have a final rehearsal in the school hall before walking half a mile or so down the road to BBC Broadcasting House to record our four pieces: Monteverdi's *Christus natus est*, Weelkes's *Welcome, sweet pleasure*, a Swiss folksong and Martin Shaw's *Fanfare*. While we were singing we heard the urgent sound of emergency sirens, but that was a regular backdrop to life in Northern Ireland. Then we were interrupted by a fellow pupil sent to tell us that there was a car bomb outside an office building just across the road. No sooner had she spoken than there was a shattering explosion. The lecture hall windows fell in, and everyone yelled, screamed or burst into tears.

In my diary I described glass sprinkled all over the floor, clouds of dust, dirt and smoke drifting in through the broken windows and 'an awful smell'. Half the choir was close to hysterics and it took a while to calm them down. But there was no question of postponing our recording session. After a hasty cup of tea we went down to the BBC, delivered our four performances... and when 'Let the Peoples Sing' was broadcast a few weeks later we discovered that we had reached the final three of our category.

> In my diary, I described glass sprinkled all over the floor, clouds of dust, dirt and smoke drifting in through the broken windows

In the context of those violent times, this incident was considered trivial. Though the office block was a write-off, nobody was hurt. Almost all windows on two sides of our school building were smashed, but it was a Friday afternoon, and by Monday they had been repaired and the mess cleared up. 'Our' bomb was just one of more than 20 explosions and several shooting incidents in the province that weekend, in which three people were shot dead and more than 30 injured.

The start of the late-20th-century phase of the Northern Irish Troubles (see p50) coincided with

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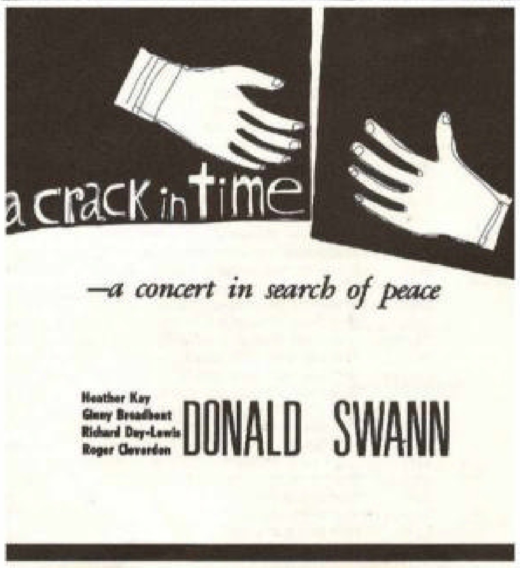
my first term at Victoria College, located in what is now the Crescent Arts Centre, a few hundred metres from Queen's University. An early confrontation between the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association, demanding equal social and political rights for Roman Catholics, and a crowd of extremist Protestants led by the Reverend Ian Paisley took place right outside the school one afternoon in October 1968, when I was still settling into my routine of catching a bus up the road to my weekly violin lesson. On this occasion, the buses couldn't get past the demonstrators, and I had to take a circuitous route on foot, fearfully dodging the chanting marchers. This particular confrontation passed off fairly peacefully, but over the next couple of years the battle lines between the province's two communities were drawn ever more violently. What had begun as an occasional inconvenience turned into constant disruption and life-threatening danger.



Music for a difficult era: a poster for Donald Swann's concert for peace; (right) a 1970s LP by the Ulster Singers, the choir in which Clare's mother sang

In his new film *Belfast*, Kenneth Branagh vividly depicts how the working-class streets which he and his friends had treated as stage sets for imaginary shoot-outs between cowboys and Indians suddenly became real-life war zones. The experience of my middle-class family, living in a leafy suburban avenue, was different. Explosions and bursts of gunfire were a soundtrack to many evenings, but they were usually (not always) a mile or two away. We tried to continue with normal life as much as possible. For my mother this meant rehearsing and performing with the Ulster Singers, an amateur choir founded by her singing teacher John Vine (who also taught the soprano Heather Harper). Listening to Mum practising the alto lines of Britten's *War Requiem* or Honegger's *King David*, or attending the choir's

A divided community: (left) British troops arrest civilians on Rossville Street, Londonderry during a civil rights march on 'Bloody Sunday'; (below left) armed vigilantes in Bogside ready to face the Apprentice Boys of Derry, 1969

The start of the Troubles

The early events in N Ireland

5 October 1968
As friction between Catholics and Protestants, nationalists and loyalists, increases, a Catholic civil rights march in Derry/Londonderry is banned by the Northern Ireland government. The march goes ahead anyway, and over 100 people are injured as the (mainly Protestant) Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) ruthlessly breaks it up.

12 August 1969
A march by the loyalist Apprentice Boys of Derry leads to large-scale fighting with nationalists in the city's Bogside area. When the RUC tries to storm the area with armoured vehicles and water cannons, the fighting simply escalates. The 'Battle of the Bogside' lasts for three days.

14 August 1969
British army troops are deployed in Derry and Belfast and within a month start to build a 'peace wall' to separate Belfast's largely nationalist Falls and predominantly loyalist Shankill communities.

3-5 July 1970
Four civilians are killed and a number of soldiers injured when British army searches of properties in the Falls district lead to gun battles with the Irish Republican Army (IRA).

4 December 1971
Fifteen people are killed when the loyalist paramilitary Ulster Volunteer Force detonates a bomb in McGurk's Bar in Belfast, a pub frequented by Catholics/nationalists.

30 January 1972
On 'Bloody Sunday', 13 unarmed protesters are killed by the British army during an anti-internment rally in Derry. Antipathy towards the British military significantly worsens and support for the IRA increases.

21 July 1972
'Bloody Friday' sees the IRA detonate 22 bombs within the space of just over an hour in Belfast, killing nine people and injuring over 130.

annual Holy Week performances of Bach's *St Matthew Passion*, introduced me to choral music. Vine's successor as conductor of the Ulster Singers was Havelock Nelson, senior music producer with BBC Northern Ireland; under his direction the choir regularly appeared on local and national radio and television, particularly on *Songs of Praise*, and once, very excitingly for us, on a networked light entertainment TV programme celebrating St Patrick's Day.

Serious disruption to the choir's schedule during the Troubles was surprisingly infrequent, despite the risks of travelling across town to rehearsal or recording venues. However, a loyalist workers' strike in response to the imposition of direct rule from Westminster led to power cuts on the night of the 1972 *St Matthew Passion* in a Belfast church. In failing light, the choir managed to get through Part I, with no organ and with the boys of the *ripieno* choir holding candles and bicycle lamps next to the orchestra's music stands. The next night, they reconvened to perform Part II in the same circumstances, in place of the full performance that had been scheduled for Downpatrick, 25 miles away.

The Ulster Orchestra proudly boasts that it never cancelled a concert during this period, continuing to fulfil its remit as a professional symphony orchestra for the whole province with performances in smaller towns and cities as well as in Belfast. Audiences inevitably shrank, however, not so much through fear of being caught up in a terrorist incident but because of transport difficulties. Cars parked in the city at night were vulnerable to being stolen and the railway stations and bus depots, targets of numerous bombs, were roofless shells in the early 1970s – cold, dark and uncomfortable.

For special events many of us were prepared to surmount the difficulties. International artists were reluctant to visit Northern Ireland, but those who did were welcomed with enormous enthusiasm. I remember queuing on a freezing Sunday afternoon to hear Yehudi Menuhin give a wonderful solo recital in a city centre cinema and being part of the packed audience in St Anne's Cathedral for a 1974 concert by The King's Singers, then hugely famous through their regular appearances on TV variety shows.

'Four of us were married with little children, and our wives were not over-keen on us going to Belfast,' recalls countertenor Nigel Perrin, one of the group's founder members. 'We assured them we would not go near any pubs [which might be bombed], but when the dean of the Cathedral picked us up from the airport he announced

Braving Belfast: Yehudi Menuhin made several visits to the city; (right) a poster for The King's Singers' 1974 appearance; (below) Nigel Perrin

that he was taking us to a pub for pie and chips – oops! We were perfectly safe, of course, and a warm welcome left us in no doubt how much our presence was appreciated. Ironically, the IRA chose that weekend to go berserk with bombs in London, so we were more worried about our families back home than about ourselves!'

Another visitor was singer, pianist and composer Donald Swann, who gave 'A Concert in Search of Peace' in Belfast with a quartet of singers at the invitation of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FoR), an association of Christian pacifists. The head of music at my school was a member of FoR and the group's itinerary included a performance for us and a longer concert at Queen's University, where the focus was Swann's deeply moving *Requiem for the Living*, with a secular text by Cecil Day-Lewis following the pattern of the liturgy for the dead. This made a huge impression on me.

Such inspirational events apart, our musical horizons were limited. Just before I joined my school choir, it had performed Fauré's Requiem with a boys' grammar school, but the Troubles caused a hiatus of several years in that sort of collaboration; I had no opportunity to sing repertoire for full mixed-voice choir until I went to university in Scotland.

Instrumentalists fared better, with both the council-funded City of Belfast School of Music, and the independent Ulster College of Music nurturing players such as brothers Paul, Jonathan and Christopher Barritt and Ruth Ehrlich who went on to membership of the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain, music college in England and distinguished professional careers.

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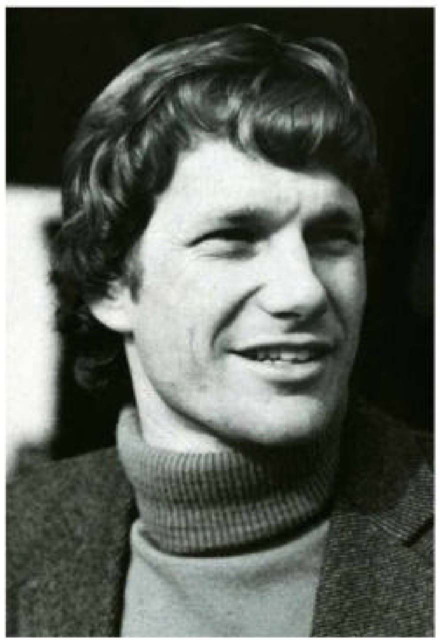


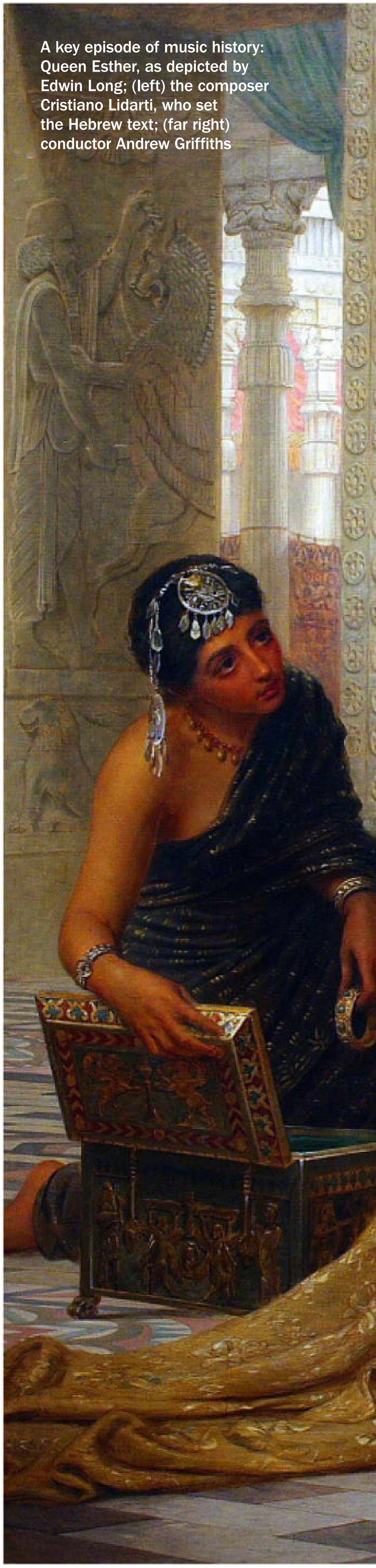
'We were perfectly safe, and a warm welcome left us in no doubt how much our presence in Belfast was appreciated'

I wasn't a keen enough violinist to benefit from that myself, but we did go to their concerts.

Every year, a member of the City of Belfast Youth Orchestra who has demonstrated particular determination as well as musical ability receives the Stephen Parker Award, named in memory of a 14-year-old horn player with the orchestra who died as he tried to warn people about a car bomb at a parade of shops in a residential area of North Belfast. His parents decided that his memorial should contribute in the long term towards 'the life and welfare of his beloved orchestra' by supporting another child's progress, contributing to the cost of lessons, masterclasses or equipment.

Stephen Parker was one of nine people killed on 'Bloody Friday', 21 July 1972, when 22 bombs went off across Belfast with very little warning. On the other side of the city, my family watched as exploding paint tins flew into the air from a burning filling station half a mile from our house, while we waited for the army to deal with another bomb under the nearby railway bridge. A controlled explosion brought down three of our ceilings and broke five windows. We were lucky: that was a minor incident on a terrible day.

Every musician who grew up in Northern Ireland at that time will have similar stories to tell. Those from generations after mine may have had more performance opportunities, as schools, churches and musical organisations found ways to run activities safely, and terrorists reduced the number of random attacks on the general public. But like me, they will certainly recall teenage years very different from those of their contemporaries in England, Scotland or Wales.



A key episode of music history: Queen Esther, as depicted by Edwin Long; (left) the composer Cristiano Lidarti, who set the Hebrew text; (far right) conductor Andrew Griffiths

A Hebrew tale

Michael White reports on how a rediscovered 18th-century oratorio is set to enjoy its British premiere in the language of the Old Testament

When Handel's Old Testament oratorio *Esther* had its first public performance in 1732, the soloists – largely Italian and including stars like the castrato Senesino – so mangled the English text that one commentator observed 'it might as well have been Hebrew'.

This proved a curiously prophetic observation. Some years later the libretto was indeed adapted into Hebrew, with someone else's music substituting for that of Handel. The result then disappeared into the void that can be music history, yet it has been reconstructed from assorted manuscripts found in unlikely places, and gets a long-delayed UK premiere this month – in Hebrew – when Andrew Griffiths conducts HGO, the north London company once known as Hampstead Garden Opera. Called *The Salvation of Israel by the Hands of Esther,* the score was composed in 1774 by one Cristiano Lidarti, an Austrian of Italian descent. As HGO's chairman David Conway says, 'It's not the kind of thing we would normally take on, except that I happen to have an academic interest in the historical access of Jews to Western art music, and this piece is a key example that was little-known until very recently – which is why it's never been done in Britain.'

Esther is, of course, a Jewish story, about a young girl plucked from humble origins to be the wife of the King of Persia at a time when Jews were being persecuted. Bravely, she reveals to her husband that she herself is Jewish, persuading him to spare the lives of her people. And for centuries this narrative has been dramatised into stage-plays performed during the Judaic feast of Purim.

It's possible that Handel may have seen such a 'Purim-spiel' in Venice and remembered it when writing his original *Esther.* In any case, he knew that his Old Testament oratorios had a following with the Jewish community of mid-18th-century London. And word about them spread to communities abroad – including a congregation of Sephardic Jews in Amsterdam, who took a keen interest.

'Up to this point in time', says Conway, 'very few Jews involved themselves professionally in Western art music, because they didn't have the usual access routes through church or court. But things were starting to change. And these Amsterdam Sephardis were actively commissioning new art music that could relate to their own cultural traditions.'

Accordingly, they forged a relationship with Cristiano Lidarti, a Christian and an established church musician based in Pisa, who was open to offers. After writing several small-scale choral works for the Amsterdam congregation, he was provided with a Hebrew adaptation (almost word for word) of the text for Handel's *Esther* made by a local rabbi, and asked to set it to new music. What he produced was almost certainly the first Western oratorio ever composed to a Hebrew

GETTY, BEN EALOVEGA

libretto. But it seems that it was never actually performed, and over time the words and music got separated – with copies of the text turning up in Israel while the music was thought lost until, in classic manner, a Cambridge University librarian spotted something of interest in a manuscripts sale: the missing score.

That was in the 1990s, and through recent years performances have taken place in Israel, France, America, but not in Britain – hence the opportunity that HGO, effectively a training company for young opera singers, has now seized. Its singers will be working on their

> 'In this oratorio we have a unique and key record of merging cultural traditions'

Hebrew with a synagogue-trained cantor – which sounds challenging, though Conway says it's not unduly difficult 'because no one knows how 18th-century synagogue Hebrew was pronounced. So we're using current practice, which is relatively straightforward'.

So is Lidarti's score worth the effort? Conway gives a cautious yes. 'I don't claim it's great music that will sing forever in your heart. But it's charming, in the *galant* style of early classical, paying obvious debts to the likes of Jommelli (Lidarti's teacher) as well as Pergolesi and Haydn. And above all, it's a unique record of merging cultural traditions at a key moment in time.

'By the mid-19th-century it was almost a truism in Europe that Jews were inherently musical. But a century earlier they'd been thought not to be musical at all. So in this oratorio we have a landmark piece that heralds this change. It needs a hearing.'

Lidarti's Esther is performed by HGO with the Londinium Choir on 13 March at the Free Church, Hampstead Garden Suburb

FIFTEEN OF NOTE

15 musical nonagenarians

For some performers and composers, the notion of retiring at 90 has been simply out of the question, as *Terry Blain* explains

ILLUSTRATION: DAVID LYTTLETON

A comfortable retirement, free of work and with acres of leisure time available. Something we all aspire to, right? Not quite, it seems, especially if you happen to be a classical musician. Composers have a particularly difficult time packing away their manuscript paper. Rossini and Verdi both tried but failed, the latter returning in his 70s to write *Otello* and *Falstaff*. Performers can also find it hard to step away from the 'garish lights' (Dickens's coinage) of the concert platform, and it's not rare to see sprightly young 70- or 80-somethings stepping onto the stage.

Some press on even further, still working enthusiastically into their 90s – such as pianist Ruth Slenczynska who, at 97, has just recorded a new album for Deccca. Here, then, are 15 of Slenczynska's fellow nonagenarians for whom the buzz of creativity is too pleasurable to relinquish.

1 Herbert Blomstedt

Who is the most dynamic Beethoven conductor alive today? *The New Yorker* recently cast its vote for the 94-year-old Herbert Blomstedt, citing a performance of the Seventh Symphony with 'a frothing energy that bordered on animal joy'. Where does the Swedish musician acquire his vim and vigour? Being teetotal and a lifelong non-smoker possibly helps. But mainly it's being 'hopelessly in love with music' that spurs him on. Chicago, Leipzig, Vienna, Berlin and London are all on his calling-card in the next few months. Quite the lead-in to July's 95th birthday celebrations.

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2 Pablo Casals

Unlike Blomstedt, the Spanish cellist Pablo Casals loved smoking, sometimes playing with a pipe in his mouth. His performing career spanned an incredible 84 years, including recitals for Queen Victoria and in John F Kennedy's White House. Also a composer and conductor, at 94 years old he led his *Himne a les Nacions Unides* at the UN General Assembly, and continued playing until shortly before his death two years later. 'Be young all your life,' he advised. 'And say things to the world that are true.'

3 Andrés Segovia

Segovia was also a keen pipe smoker. More importantly, he revolutionised perceptions of the guitar, establishing it as a 'serious' classical instrument. The Spaniard performed well into his nineties, although results could be unpredictable. 'The legendary fingers would obey him only intermittently,' one reviewer wrote of a 1984 concert. But Segovia carried on until he was 94, defying poor eyesight and increasing physical frailty. Why? 'I will have an eternity to rest,' he retorted.

4 Menahem Pressler

Over half a century, Menahem Pressler's Beaux Arts Trio acquired iconic status, and when it finally disbanded in 2008 the German pianist might easily have slipped quietly into a well-earned retirement. Not a bit of it. At 84, he relaunched his career as a solo pianist. Aged 90, he made a belated debut with the Berlin Philharmonic and recorded CDs of Mozart and Debussy. Even life-saving surgery in 2015 couldn't stop him. 'Still I think about what I have done, what I could do,' he says. 'And what I will do.'

5 Thea Musgrave

Similar thoughts are in Scottish composer Thea Musgrave's mind as she approaches her 94th birthday. Not content with ten operas already in the bag, she's working on an eleventh – *Orlando*, based on Virginia Woolf's novel. Three hours every morning, seven days a week, is her schedule. 'During the lockdown it has kept me sane,' she says. 'I have my imagination, which can go where it wants.'

6 Elliott Carter

Musgrave has for many years lived in the US, where Mr and Mrs Elliott Carter were frequent dinner companions. A king of compositional longevity, Carter wrote his first opera at 90, and its title – *What Next?* – was clearly a question he was still asking himself on a daily basis. He went on to publish 60 more pieces before his death in 2012, aged 103. He knew some found his music 'difficult', but it kept on drawing admirers. 'I'll be damned if I know why I write all that music that people like,' he said. 'That *some* people like, anyhow.'

7 George Walker

'Keep going' was the advice given to Carter's fellow US composer George Walker by his teacher Nadia Boulanger. He needed it. His career as a pianist was

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seriously impeded 'because I was black', and it was difficult to get his own music programmed. Nevertheless he persisted, eventually winning a Pulitzer Prize for his *Lilacs* in 1996. 'I strongly felt if I continued to press for what I hoped to achieve, I would achieve it,' he once said. He wrote his last work in 2016, aged 94.

8 Havergal Brian

In 1927, Havergal Brian added the final touches to his vast Symphony No. 1, 'The Gothic'. So huge were its demands, however, that the work did not receive its professional debut until 1966, eight months after the English composer had celebrated his 90th birthday. Even at that age, he had by no means finished writing symphonies – of his total of 32, seven were yet to be written. An often cantankerous type, his doggedness nonetheless attracted fervent followers. Not many composers, one writer commented, could claim to have been writing 'at the same time as both Brahms and Elton John'.

9 Leopold Stokowski

When Stokowski conducted the premiere of Brian's 28th Symphony in 1973, it was probably the first ever example of 'a 91-year-old conductor learning a new work by a 91-year-old composer', as one observer put it. The London-born Stokowski had sealed his fame in the US, conducting the soundtrack for Disney's *Fantasia*. Aged 90, he returned to England, showing an undimmed appetite for performing and, as *The Guardian* reported, 'conveying his fire, his authority with the urgency of a man half a century younger'.

10 Neville Marriner

Like Stokowski, Neville Marriner conducted a best-selling movie soundtrack (1984's *Amadeus*), and performed into his nineties. As an orchestral violinist he played under legendary maestros such as Furtwängler, Monteux and Toscanini before he started 'twitching around' on the podium himself. In his trademark turtleneck pullover, he proved a hugely successful 'twitcher', making more records with his Academy of St Martin in the Fields than any other conductor-orchestra partnership. He disliked high-falutin descriptions of conducting, describing it as 'not very difficult'. No wonder, then, that 'Follow the beat' was his chosen epitaph.

Stokowski conveyed his fire with the urgency of a man half a century younger

11 Fanny Waterman

Fanny Waterman, by contrast, was more used to people following her beat. An acclaimed pianist in early life, in 1961 she founded the Leeds International Piano Competition, building it into one of classical music's most prestigious competitions. Her energy and can-do attitude were legendary. 'They call me Field Marshal Fanny,' she said. 'I am a busy breeches.' Waterman left 'The Leeds' aged 95, later claiming she'd been forced out by management: 'I didn't think it was the right time. I wanted to be there forever.'

12 Mieczysław Horszowski

In 1972, the Polish pianist Mieczysław Horszowski phoned Fanny Waterman to tell her that his pupil Murray Perahia would win that year's Leeds competition. Perahia did. Horszowski himself spent an incredible nine decades performing in public, being 'one of the outstanding cases where a child prodigy grew unflaggingly into a great musician', as Pablo Casals put it. Aged nine, Horszowski played Beethoven's First Piano Concerto in Warsaw, and 90 years later gave his final recital in Philadelphia. 'Age to me is but a relative thing,' he said. 'It is nothing so profound.'

13 Ivry Gitlis

'According to the rules I should be dead by now,' said Ivry Gitlis on turning 90. 'But I don't feel like it!' The Israeli violinist was a free spirit, as happy collaborating with Yoko Ono, Stéphane Grappelli and François Truffaut as he was on a conventional recital platform. Even confinement to a wheelchair couldn't stop him playing. Aged 96, he was pushed onstage in Tel Aviv by conductor Zubin Mehta and performed for half an hour with pianist Martha Argerich. It was one of his last appearances.

14 Al Gallodoro

Saxophonist and clarinettist Al Gallodoro was a kindred crossover spirit. He started as a jazzman in Paul Whiteman's orchestra and claimed he'd performed the famous clarinet glissando launching Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* over 10,000 times in his career. He also had classical chops aplenty, playing bass clarinet in Toscanini's famed NBC Symphony Orchestra. Described by bandleader Jimmy Dorsey as 'the best sax player who ever lived', Gallodoro gave his last concert just two weeks before he died, aged 95, in 2008.

15 Earl Wild

Pianist Earl Wild had Gershwin connections too. He played *Rhapsody in Blue* under Toscanini, and composed elaborate keyboard pieces based on his fellow American's music. But it's as a 'super-virtuoso in the Horowitz class' that he is best remembered, excelling in Liszt and Rachmaninov. Quadruple-bypass surgery threatened to end his career in 2004, but a year later he bounced back in an acclaimed Carnegie Hall recital three days after his 90th birthday. 'After I had my operation I decided I wasn't going to stop playing,' he said. 'Why live if you can't play when you've done it all your life?'

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Lausitz Germany & Poland

This extensive region straddling Germany's eastern border is now the proud host of an international festival, as *Simon Broughton* explains

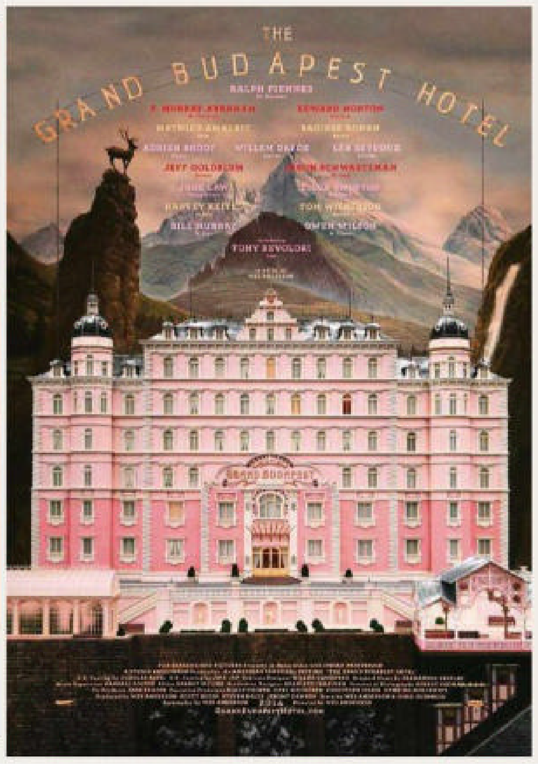
Dreams and legends: Bad Muskau's castle is a regular festival venue; (above right) festival performer Martha Argerich; Görlitz features in films such as *The Grand Budapest Hotel*

Lausitz isn't a town but a region in Germany. It is hardly well known in Britain and not much better-known in Germany. But the Lausitz Festival, which takes place in August and September each year, gives a rare opportunity to see top artists such as pianist Martha Argerich, violinist Gidon Kremer and composer and saxophonist John Zorn in some extraordinary venues including the Jugendstil State Theatre in Cottbus, a fantasy castle in Bad Muskau, and Görlitz synagogue, one of few in Germany that survived Kristallnacht.

One festival performance took place in a former Stasi prison in Bautzen. 'Visitors get to see some very interesting places, seeing cultures change virtually within the length of a cigarette and get to reflect on that with performances that are unique,' says Israeli-born festival director Daniel Kühnel, who has also been director of the Hamburg Symphony Orchestra for the last 16 years. 'It really is an experience.'

Lausitz is in the far east of Germany, in the states of Saxony and Brandenburg, and extends over the Neisse river into Poland and south into the Czech Republic. First held in 2020, the festival has funding in place until 2038. It includes music, theatre, film and spoken word, but for non-German speakers its music is the main draw.

Lausitz Festival HQ is in Görlitz, a handsome town which survived the war virtually intact with a jewel-like old town at its heart – Kühnel points out that it's



Playing to a captive audience: Messiaen

A wintry premiere
Stalag VIIA

Outside the Polish town of Zgorzelec is the site of the German prisoner of war camp Stalag VIIA where with three fellow prisoners Messiaen premiered his *Quartet for the End of Time* on 15 January 1941. The camp was used by the Polish army until the 1970s. The site of the Theatre Barracks where the quartet was premiered is now marked with a sculpture. In 2015 the Meetingpoint Music Messiaen was opened where the Quartet is performed every 15 January. 'I see it as an alternative New Year's concert,' says the founder Frank Seibel, 'a 45-minute meditative moment to consider activities in the new year.'

halfway between Moscow and Santiago de Compostela, so truly at the centre of Europe. It has been dubbed 'Görliwood' as it is frequently used as a filming location, featuring in Tarantino's *Inglourious Basterds*, Stephen Daldry's *The Reader* and Wes Anderson's *The Grand Budapest Hotel* among others. All the street signs in the cobbled centre of town can be swiftly unscrewed for filming purposes.

The Neisse river runs through Görlitz, which since 1945 has formed the Polish border, and festival events also take place in Zgorzelec on the Polish side. One concert with pianist Piotr Anderszewski playing Bach Preludes and Fugues had its first half in the Görlitz synagogue in Germany and, with a walk over the Neisse, the second half in St Bonifatius Church in Zgorzelec, Poland.

Also on the Polish side is the site of the World War II prisoner of war camp where Messiaen composed and performed his *Quartet for the End of Time* (see right). The festival always features Messiaen's music and, reflecting its geography, Polish and Czech composers have some prominence in the programme.

The festival, funded mostly by Germany's central government, is to help reinvigorate an area of former East Germany where the mining and textile industries have disappeared and votes for the right-wing NPD party are strong. 'It's to make people from outside aware that it's nice to be here and give them another reason to come,' says Kühnel. 'And to tell people here that great things happen here too. But you can't just copy the Salzburg Festival and put it here. Because Salzburg is a beautiful small town, but this is a region that takes two-and-a-half hours to drive across.'

GETTY

An hour's drive from Görlitz is Bad Muskau and a large estate – now a UNESCO World Heritage site – created by the larger-than-life count and garden designer Hermann von Pückler-Muskau (1785-1871). He built a neo-Baroque castle in the early 19th century surrounded by a carefully landscaped but natural-looking 'English garden' which now extends six square kilometres over the German-Polish border. Pückler was much influenced by English garden designer Humphry Repton whom he met in 1816. Bad Muskau castle was in ruins after WWII, but restored after German re-unification in the 1990s.

Görlitz is truly at the centre of Europe, with a jewel-like old town at its heart

From the castle – which has a nice exhibition about Count Pückler – you can walk through the gardens across bridges into Poland and back. The castle has also been the host for a Festival performance of Osvaldo Golijov's *Dreams and Prayers of Isaac the Blind*, a powerful piece for clarinet quintet depicting a few thousand years of Jewish history through musical invocations of its Aramaic, Yiddish and Hebrew stages.

Jewish music is a major ingredient in the Festival, particularly in 2021 which marked 1700 years of Judaism in Germany. 'The cordon going from here through Silesia to Galicia and the Black Sea was a centre of Jewish life in Europe,' says Kühnel. 'In the past, one had to learn to accept someone who lives next to you and with you, but in a different world. It's necessary today in our heterogeneous immigrant world as well. That's why we celebrate this vanished life which was a reality here 100 years ago.'

Lausitz Festival tends to avoid the obvious. For instance, one of Martha Argerich's performances in 2021 was alongside Akane Sakai in the two-piano version of *Rite of Spring*, accompanying Michael Volle in Musorgsky's *Songs and Dances of Death* and in chamber music by the Polish composer Grażyna Bacewicz. Walking back from such an experience through these extraordinary streets of old-world Europe was simply a joy.

Further info: Lausitz Festival: **lausitz-festival.eu/en/**

Richard Strauss

Strauss made his reputation with his 'big three' operas but, as *Malcolm Hayes* explores, many of his great masterpieces were still to come

ILLUSTRATION: MATT HERRING

Composer of the Week is broadcast on Radio 3 at 12pm, Monday to Friday. Programmes in March are:
28 February – 4 March **Clementi**
7-11 March **Henriette Bosmans**
14-18 March **Debussy**
21-25 March **Rimsky-Korsakov/ Mussorgsky/Borodin**
28 March – 1 April **Biber**

Richard Strauss composed 15 operas – a sequence comprising one of the great glories of 20th-century music. Yet outside the German-speaking musical world, the focus remains on the small number of works regarded as 'essential Strauss' – *Salome*, *Elektra* and *Der Rosenkavalier* (and to some extent the smaller-scale *Ariadne auf Naxos*). These were written around midway in Strauss's life, before or during the First World War – as was their big-scale successor *Die Frau ohne Schatten* (The Woman without a Shadow), a symbolism-loaded fairy tale distantly derived from Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, containing some wondrous music, and less of a rarity today in the world's big opera houses. But that leaves another ten works in the sequence. What of them?

Strauss's upbringing in Munich was presided over by his father Franz, one of the finest horn players of his time, with conservative, Wagner-disliking musical tastes that conditioned those of his ultra-gifted young son. The teenage Strauss then became a passionate Wagnerian anyway. As his early conducting career prospered, he followed up his 'breakthrough' orchestral works (*Don Juan* among them) with a first opera, staged in Weimar where he held the post of Kapellmeister.

He wrote his own libretto for *Guntram*, a story about an over-idealistic troubadour singer-poet in medieval Germany, set to music following Wagner's example in *Lohengrin*. While the work's dramatic inertia has largely kept it out of theatres since its premiere in 1894, during rehearsals Strauss became engaged to Pauline de Ahna, who was singing the principal soprano role of Freihild. Their marriage was to be long, never dull (Pauline's violent-tempered outbursts were legendary) and very happy.

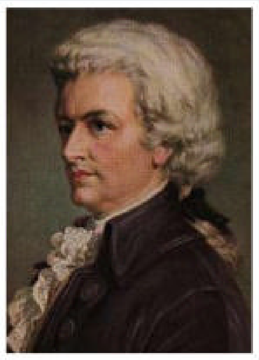
Next came *Feuersnot* (Fire Famine), premiered at Dresden in 1901; the plot, set on Midsummer Night in medieval Munich, is a heady and sexually frank counterpart to the nocturnal goings-on in Act II of Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. The confidence and panache of music and drama alike pointed the way to the wild expressionism of *Salome* and *Elektra*, followed by the radiance and sensitive insight of *Der Rosenkavalier*.

These 'big three' operas made Strauss a rich man (he built his house in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, exquisitely situated in the Bavarian Alps, on the proceeds of *Salome*). What to do next? Strauss and Hugo von Hofmannsthal (his chosen librettist since *Elektra*) shrewdly responded with something different. The opera-within-an-opera plot of *Ariadne auf Naxos* explored a deft and speedy style of singing-as-speech which was to be a fruitful resource in years to come. *Die Frau ohne Schatten* was then premiered in Vienna in 1919, in a defeated and war-exhausted Austrian Republic which, like its German counterpart, became increasingly politically unstable.

Strauss's creativity found a way of moving forward nonetheless. He wrote the libretto for his next opera, *Intermezzo*,

The focus remains on a small number of works regarded as 'essential Strauss'

Strauss's style



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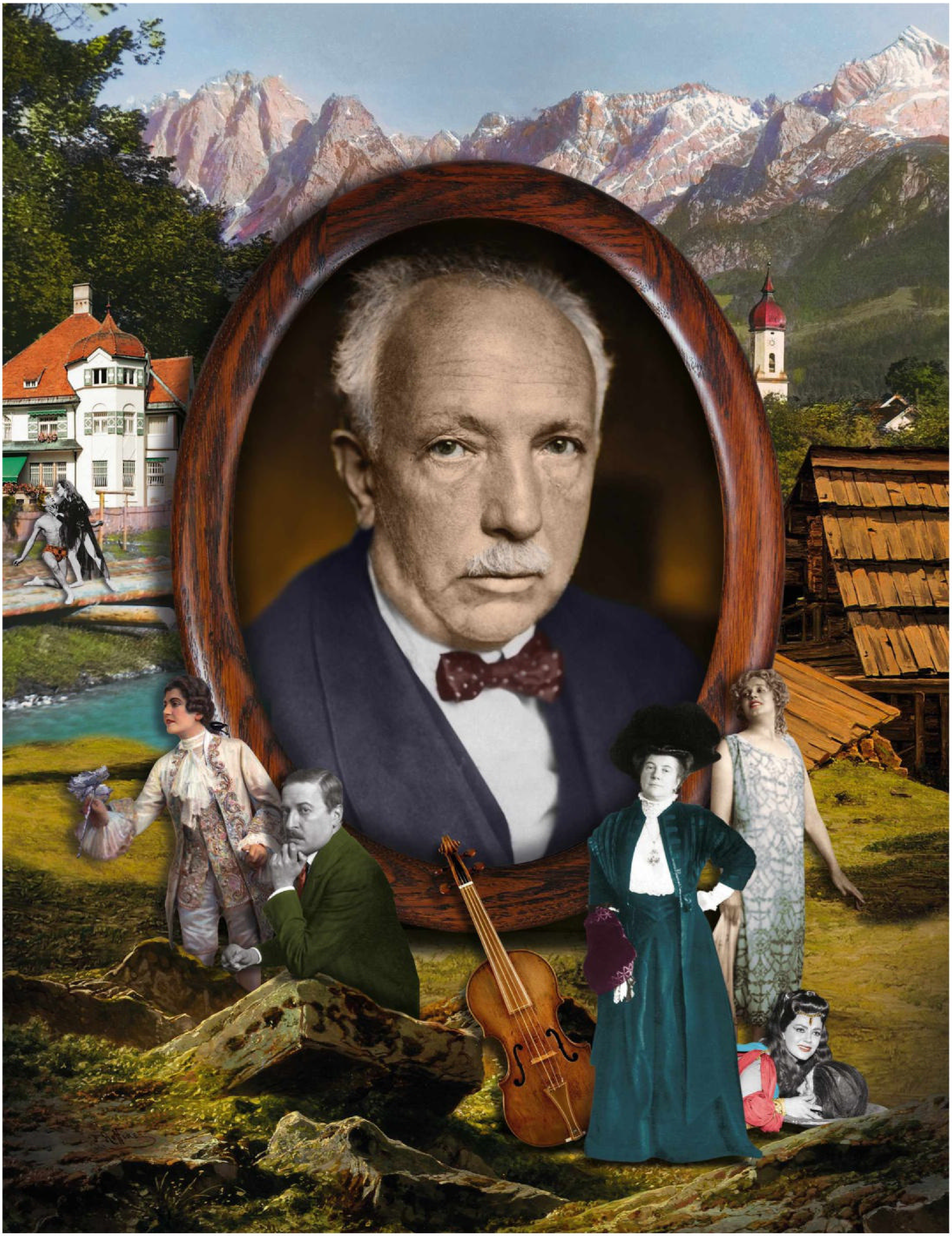
Soprano raptures Unsurprisingly for a composer married to a fine soprano singer, Strauss's operas favour that voice above others: the roles of the Feldmarschallin in *Der Rosenkavalier*, Arabella, and the Countess in *Capriccio* are regarded as classics. With exceptions, Strauss wrote less appreciatively for the expressive qualities of male voices.

Classical backdrop Contrary to his self-styled image as a Bavarian bourgeois, Strauss was widely read, with a parallel knowledge of theatre and painting. Several of his operas draw on mythological Greek stories.

Mozart re-imagined While Wagner's example lay behind Strauss's big-scale masterpieces, his last years produced a group instrumental works inspired by Mozart (above) – two Wind Sonatinas (evoking Mozart's Wind Serenades), a superlative Second Horn Concerto, an Oboe Concerto, and the *Duett-Concertino* for clarinet, bassoon and strings.

Last thoughts By March 1945, the opera houses of Munich, Vienna and Dresden had all been destroyed by Allied bombing. In memory of the German culture that he feared had gone forever, Strauss composed a tragic masterwork in *Metamorphosen* for strings. Three years later, self-exiled in Switzerland, he wrote his *Four Last Songs* – whose depth of beauty conveys calm acceptance.



recreating an incident from his own life, where an outraged Pauline had intercepted a letter to (as she wrongly thought) Strauss from another woman, apparently referring to a planned assignation. *Intermezzo* (1924) brilliantly transplants the speech-like vocal style and modest orchestral forces of *Ariadne auf Naxos* into the contemporary world of Robert and Christine Storch – and the lyrical interlude of Christine's fireside reverie is exquisitely beautiful.

Strauss worked with Hofmannsthal again on *Die ägyptische Helena* (The Egyptian Helen; 1928) – a fantastical story based loosely on Euripides's play *Helen*, combining the exotic soundworld of *Die Frau ohne Schatten* with *Salome*'s jaw-dropping virtuosity in a whirlwind experience for the eye and ear. The next project revisited trademark Strauss territory. In *Arabella*, the late 18th-century aristocratic Vienna of *Der Rosenkavalier* is brought forward to its 1860s bourgeois counterpart, where the sisters Arabella and Zdenka Waldner are looking to make successful marriages. The music takes its cue from *Der Rosenkavalier* with a poised loveliness. And Arabella herself resembles a Jane Austen heroine – charming, composed, wise and with enough of a recalcitrant streak to make the other characters take her seriously.

The period-drama appeal of *Arabella*'s world was not matched by the circumstances of its Dresden premiere in 1933. Hitler and his Nazi party had risen to power; *Arabella*'s conductor was to have been the openly Nazi-disparaging Fritz Busch, who was replaced by the less outspoken Clemens Krauss. Strauss nonetheless accepted the post of president of the newly created *Reichsmusikkammer* (Reich Music Chamber), reckoning that he could make artistic decisions that would sustain the stellar level of German culture.

His brief connection to Hitler's regime was to taint his reputation for the rest of his life

He was being duped (besides deceiving himself). He was also sending letters to colleagues dismissing the Nazis as posturing mediocrities, and during rehearsals for his next Dresden opera, *Die schweigsame Frau* (The Silent Woman), one of these letters was intercepted by the Gestapo. After the June 1935 premiere he was ordered to resign due to 'ill health'.

This short-lived official connection with Hitler's regime was to taint Strauss's international reputation for the rest of his life and beyond. And he had a Jewish daughter-in-law, Alice, the wife of his only son Franz and mother of their two young sons. For the next ten years, protecting them and Alice's widowed mother from deportation to a concentration camp was a constant worry. Thanks to connections with music-supporting Nazi officials he succeeded, but only just. (Hearing that Alice's other relatives were in the camp at Theresienstadt he drove there in person, but was unable to save them.)

Hofmannsthal had died suddenly just after completing his *Arabella* text, so *Die schweigsame Frau* had a new librettist – the Jewish writer Stefan Zweig, whose name the Nazis tried to remove from programmes for the premiere. Strauss successfully resisted this, but the opera was performed only three times. A comedy based on a play by Ben Jonson, it made a star of the young soprano Maria Cebotari, and is written with a full-tilt pace and precision that dazzles even by Straussian standards. Zweig had by now left Germany and refused to collaborate publicly on another project. The librettos of Strauss's next three operas were written by the less talented Joseph Gregor, with behind-the-scenes input from Zweig and Krauss.

Again Strauss changed tack with *Friedenstag* (Day of Peace; 1938) – set on the last day of the Thirty Years War in 1648, where the commander of a besieged town is reconciled with his enemies when news of a truce arrives. The work's finest passages have an impressive drumbeat power, different from anything Strauss had done before; equally unusual, for him, is the major role for the chorus. Contrast followed again with *Daphne* (1938), an

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Transformative tales: (left) Strauss with Margarete Teschemacher after the premiere of *Daphne* at the Semperoper in Dresden; (far left) Michaela Schuster as Nurse and Emily Magee as Empress in the Royal Opera House's *Die Frau ohne Schatten*

Ovid-inspired 'bucolic tragedy' set in mythological Greece, where the chaste heroine has two unwanted suitors: her childhood sweetheart Leukippos and the disguised god Apollo. She chooses neither, and Apollo transforms her into a laurel tree. An outwardly less than convincing plot becomes exceptional through the pastoral loveliness of Strauss's score, culminating in Daphne's transformation scene, with her voice singing wordlessly from her tree in the closing bars.

Even this achievement is surpassed in *Die Liebe der Danae* (Danae's Love), whose demands, including multiple smaller roles and a large orchestra, have kept performances rare. Again the storyline seems unpromising. Danae dreams of being seduced by a shower of gold, and two suitors present themselves: King Midas – who, not wanting Danae to be swayed by his wealth, disguises himself as a servant – and Jupiter, king of the gods. Danae's genuine love for Midas has Jupiter eventually renouncing his pursuit: his regretful acceptance of the situation is conveyed in Act III's orchestral interlude, one of Strauss's great moments. No other opera by him has so many of his finest qualities with so little of the downside (such as the tendency to longueurs).

At the 1944 Salzburg Festival, only a dress rehearsal of *Die Liebe der Danae* was possible before Hitler's policy of 'total war' in the face of Germany's looming defeat shut down the Reich's theatres. Strauss's last opera *Capriccio*, a 'conversation piece for music' with a libretto by Krauss, had fortunately been premiered in Munich in 1942, in performances timed to end before the nightly Allied bombing began. Set in pre-revolutionary France at the country house of the Countess Madeleine, the characters intricately debate the merits of words and music, represented by the poet Olivier and the composer Flamand. In the closing scene the Countess, alone with her thoughts, wonders which one she will choose as a lover; she and the music leave us guessing. Both the subject and Strauss's deft and beautiful score are as far removed from a wartime world as it's possible to imagine. Is 'art for art's sake' enough? For Strauss, it was – and his lifetime's devotion to opera articulated that belief with a constancy that never faltered.

RICHARD STRAUSS Life & Times

1864

LIFE: Richard Strauss is ***born on 11 June in Munich***. His father, Franz, is principal horn player of the Bavarian Court Orchestra and a talented player of a variety of instruments.

TIMES: In the Second Schleswig War, fought between Denmark and Prussia over the Schleswig-Holstein territory, the Prussians capture the island of Als from 9,000 Danish troops.

1885

LIFE: Now a rising conductor, he meets composer Alexander Ritter, who encourages him to embrace 'music of the future' and emulate Liszt and Wagner in his compositions rather than Brahms.

TIMES: Following German Unification in 1871, orders for the expulsion of all ethnic Poles and Russian Jews who have failed to obtain German citizenship is brutally carried out.

1894

LIFE: After a stormy courtship, he marries the soprano ***Pauline de Ahna***. She will prove an inspiration to him throughout his remaining 54 years.

TIMES: The German Princess Alix of Hesse and by Rhine marries the newly crowned Nicholas II of Russia. They will remain a devoted couple until their execution by the Bolsheviks in 1918.

1933

LIFE: He accepts his appointment to two Nazi-endorsed posts: first as principal conductor of the Bayreuth Festival then as head of the Reich Chamber of Music, formed in November.

TIMES: Less than a decade after being sentenced to five years in prison, Adolf Hitler, the leader of the National Socialist German Workers' Party, accepts the post of Chancellor of Germany.

1905

LIFE: He conducts the premiere of ***Salome***, the first of his operas to secure international fame. The advance from his publisher enables him to build the Strauss-Villa in Bavaria.

TIMES: The Dutch exotic dancer ***Mata Hari***, who is later executed as a German spy, becomes a sensation when she introduces her provocative dance at the Musée Guimet in Paris.

1949

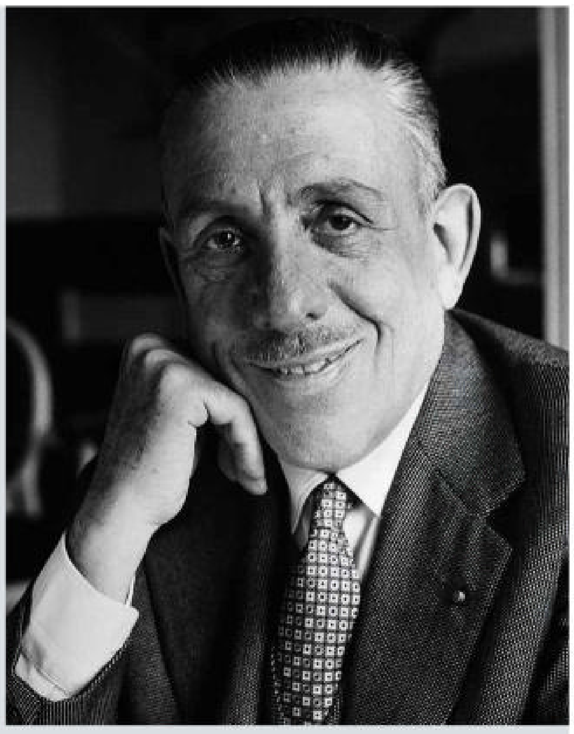
LIFE: He dies of kidney failure while asleep on 8 September. Georg Solti conducts the Bavarian State Opera Orchestra at his funeral.

TIMES: The ***Volkswagen Beetle*** is introduced to the US by Dutch dealer Ben Pon, who brings a 1948 model to New York, but fails to interest importers.

Francis Poulenc

Figure humaine

Amanda Holloway **finds the best recordings of this spectacular choral hymn to freedom, written while France was under Nazi occupation**



The composer

Having turned 40 when World War II broke out, Francis Poulenc briefly served in an anti-aircraft unit in 1940. After demobilisation, however, he spent most of his war years in Nazi-occupied Paris where he gave recitals, occasionally retiring to his estate in Noizay where he composed. A number of his wartime compositions, including the ballet *Les Animaux modèles*, contain subversive anti-German melodies, and he set texts by poets who were part of the Resistance including Aragon and Éluard. He himself was a member of the Front National des Musiciens resistance movement.

Building a Library is broadcast on Radio 3 at 9.30am each Saturday as part of *Record Review*. A highlights podcast is available on BBC Sounds.

The work

The first mention of a 'cantata for unaccompanied double choir… on admirable poems by Éluard (currently censored)' comes in a letter from Poulenc to his friend and patron Marie-Blanche de Polignac in July 1943. Safely settled in Beaulieu-sur Dordogne with his companion Raymond Destouches, Poulenc was thinking about two projects: a violin concerto for Ginette Neveu and a string quartet. Lacking inspiration for either, he turned instead to Paul Éluard's newest anti-war poems, *Poésie et vérité 42*, and in just six weeks wrote the 20-minute masterpiece *Figure humaine* without hesitation or revisions.

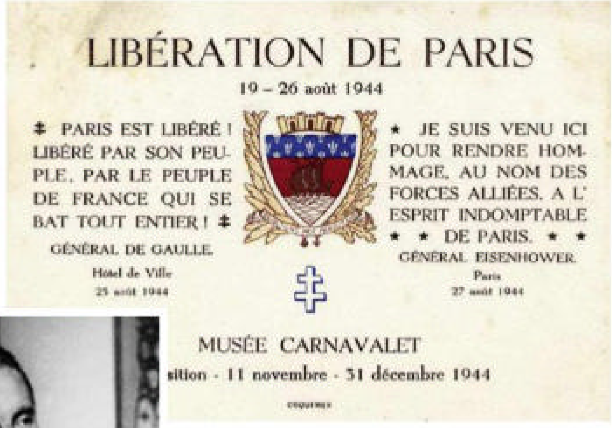
According to Poulenc biographer Roger Nichols, he gave several accounts of how and why he chose to set Éluard's poems. The most dramatic retelling is that during his stay in Beaulieu he was sent the poems under plain cover – such revolutionary texts could hardly be published under the Occupation – and was immediately inspired to set them to music so they could be premiered in Paris on the day of liberation. However, Poulenc recalled that a Belgian music society had asked him to set a single poem, 'Liberté', and after agonising over the task, he conceived the idea of writing a cantata for which 'Liberté' would provide the finale. Later, he said the plan to write, clandestinely publish and unveil *Figure humaine* on the longed-for day of liberation had come to him during a pilgrimage to Rocamadour, a shrine not far from Beaulieu.

In any case, Poulenc saw *Figure humaine* as his contribution to the war effort, creating from Éluard's impassioned poems to liberty a tribute to those who fought for France. The liberation of Paris came earlier than he had anticipated, in 1944, before arrangements could be made for a performance there. The BBC had expressed interest in the unpublished score so Poulenc, who admired British choirs, agreed that the first performance could be given in London by the BBC Chorus, in an English translation, on 25 March 1945. A Belgian performance followed in December 1946 and the Parisian premiere had to wait until 22 May 1947.

Figure humaine is one of the most extraordinary and beautiful choral works of the 20th century

Figure humaine is one of the most extraordinary and beautiful choral works of the 20th century. Poulenc used all his harmonic deftness to create a cantata whose text describes the misery of oppression and the terror of death while looking towards the hope of liberation. It is divided into eight movements, scored for two six-part choirs with frequent *divisi*, and the music is often complex with vocal parts of breathtaking variety. 'A very pure style with no bits of clever writing, variety coming just from the musical expression. It's very difficult,' wrote Poulenc to Marie-Blanche in 1943.

Poulenc imagined a choir of around 200 but for the world premiere, conducted by Leslie Woodgate, he accepted a reduction to 84, with seven singers to each part. The broadcast was scheduled for a Sunday, when some BBC Chorus members had church commitments, so members of the Variety Chorus – 'hardly used to this kind of music', as BBC producer Edward Lockspeiser remarked – were brought in. The concert was attended by musical celebrities including Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears, violinist Ginette Neveu, soprano Maggie Teyte and conductor Adrian Boult. British audiences heard the broadcast but due to unexplained technical problems, it was not heard in France. Lockspeiser wrote later: '"Liberty", the first poem in the book and the last in the cantata, assumed a significance comparable to the *Marseillaise* during the French Revolution.' The RAF had contributed to the legend when in 1942 it had dropped copies of the poem over



occupied France to boost civilian morale.

Figure humaine sets eight poems of varying lengths which pack a punch, plunging from peaceful snow scenes to nightmarish pursuits by big-jawed monsters. Even charming domestic details are woven through with horror, as in the second poem's young housemaids who sing as they scrub blood off the stones. Poulenc mirrors the mood and shape of Éluard's text with skill and imagination, culminating in 'Liberté', with its long, slow build towards the *ffff* finale. Éluard lists everything in the world that

A hope fulfilled: (above) armed fighters during the Liberation of Paris, 1944; (left) a postcard promoting a celebratory exhibition; (below left) Paul Éluard, the Resistance poet of *Figure humaine*

he holds dear – his exercise books, his breakfast bread, his friends, his beloved dog with its clumsy paws – and imagines inscribing on each a single word. That word – 'liberty' – is withheld until the poem's end. Poulenc creates extraordinary weight in the last 11 bars to mirror this revelation musically. Pitch and volume climb inexorably until all the voices converge on a brilliant E major chord covering four octaves, including a ringing top E from both choirs on the last syllable of 'Liberté'.

Often critical of his own work, Poulenc never expressed misgivings about *Figure humaine*. After the performance by the Belgian Radio Choir in 1946, he wrote to the conductor, Paul Collaer, 'Suddenly for 20 minutes I could believe I was a great composer! A very nice feeling!'

Turn the page to discover the recommended recordings of Poulenc's Figure humaine

GETTY

Youthful conviction: Matthieu Romano and Ensemble Aedes bring native understanding

The best recording

A fresh and uninhibited triumph

Mathieu Romano *(conductor)*

Ensemble Aedes

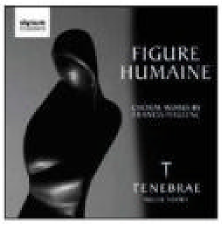
Aparté AP 201

Figure humaine makes enormous demands on the stamina, technique and musicianship of any choir, which may explain why it's performed less often than Poulenc's *Gloria* or *Stabat mater*. Of the dozen-plus recordings currently available, the majority feature nearer 40 rather than the 200 singers Poulenc envisaged. Two French choirs and two British choirs stand out for their impressive technique and emotional impact, and of the four, Ensemble Aedes, directed by Mathieu Romano, go straight to the heart with their gutsy performance. The young French soloists do for choral works what the Il Giardino Armonico ensemble did for instrumental classics – namely, deliver them with fresh, uninhibited tone. They may be raw and approximate at times, but Poulenc wanted citizens on the barricades, not choristers.

Ensemble Aedes's gutsy performance goes straight to the heart of *Figure humaine*

The opening bars are crucial – the basses' entrance must strike fear, or at the very least apprehension, into the heart. Their grumbling 'De tous les printemps du monde' recalls the dull thud of shells landing on the earth, and the venom of 'le plus laid', Poulenc's ugliest dissonance sung with increasing emphasis by the choir, sends shivers down the spine. By contrast the second song, 'En chantant les servantes s'élancent', with its mocking la-la-la-la underlay, is jaunty, crisp and clear. When the two choirs come together they make Poulenc's polyphony blaze, never more so than in the seventh poem, 'La menace sous le ciel rouge', when the *pianissimo* passage builds into a *fortissimo* for both choirs on 'des hommes indestructibles' – 'men will forever be immortal'. Romano doesn't deliver the extreme tempo markings Poulenc suggests for the eighth movement, 'Liberté', but the changes of texture are heard quite clearly as phrases are passed between the two choirs or narrowed down to individual parts.

Three other great recordings



Nigel Short (conductor)

Tenebrae give an accomplished performance, recorded in 2009, with a delicious pairing of Poulenc's Mass in G, but it doesn't deliver the visceral punch of Ensemble Aedes. The basses' opening phrase is hearty rather than chilling, and the sopranos are cool and controlled: their intonation is astonishing and the text is clearly audible. Short adopts Poulenc's extreme tempos with varying success: the third and seventh movements are electrifying but the eighth rather hurtles towards the climax. The acoustic in St Bartholomew the Great separates and clarifies the voices in an interesting fashion. *(Signum SIGCD197)*

Laurence Equilbey (conductor)

A leisurely rather than menacing opening from the basses and a lack of weight in the alto line in the first song suggest that the Accentus Chamber Choir, recorded in 2001, consists of a few soloists rather than a full ensemble. On the positive side, the text is articulated beautifully and the tuning is spot on. Words like 'ridicule' and 'menace' are spat out with satisfying vigour and their pronunciation gives this French choir

the edge over non-Francophones. The rather distant recording emphasises the pure, floated soprano line over the lower voices. *(Naïve V 4883)*

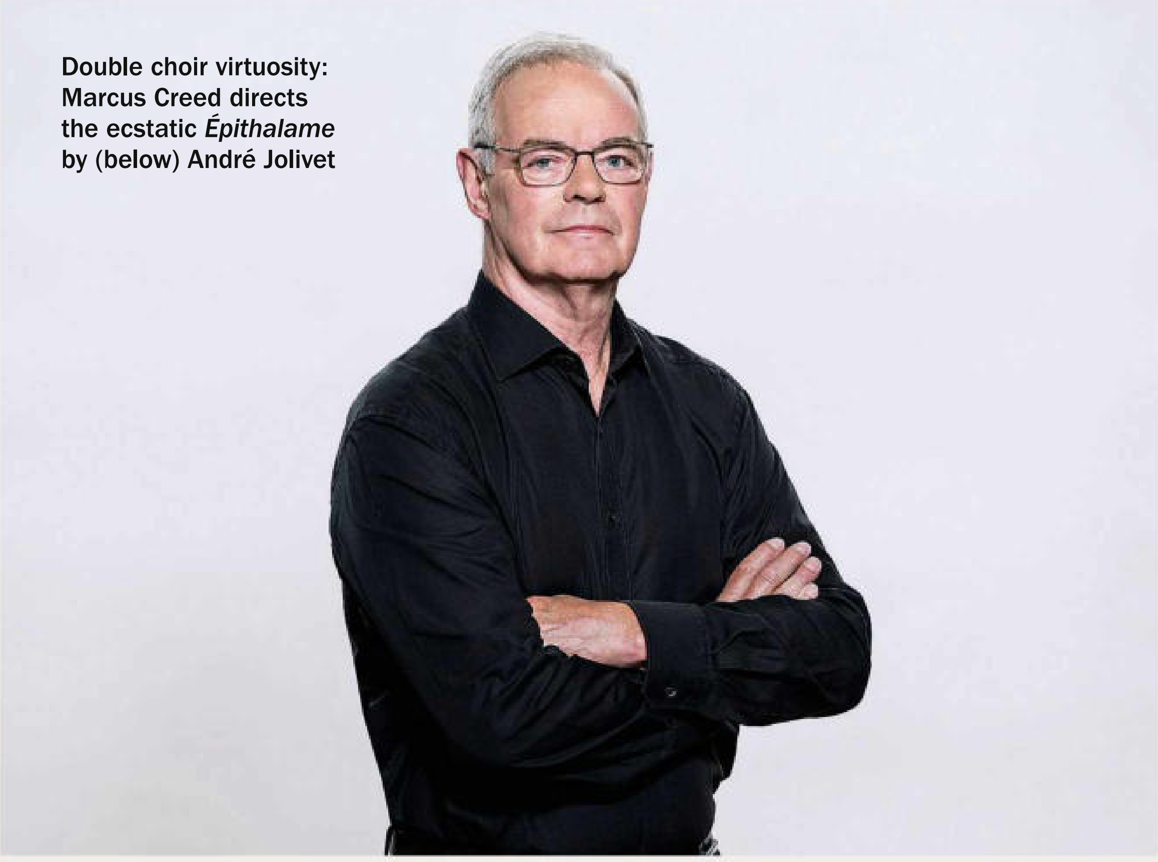
John Eliot Gardiner (conductor) Recorded in the Guildhall in 1994, the Monteverdi Choir's uninhibited, theatrical performance is refreshing if less polished and accurate than some recent, more technically accomplished recordings. The tuning may at times be wayward and individual voices stand out, but there's an honesty to this account. The Poulenc is sandwiched between Bach and Tavener, along with the choir's more familiar repertoire of Monteverdi, Gabrieli, Schütz and Purcell. *(Philips 446 1162)*

And one to avoid...

Conductor Peter Dijkstra acknowledges that it's a risk to record one of Poulenc's most difficult choral works, particularly since there are many good versions already – but he can't resist having a say of his own. In this 2010 recording, he sweeps the Swedish Radio Choir along in his enthusiasm and they rise to many of the challenges but this is not a must-have version. Dijkstra's speeds sometimes drag and the clarity of the text is compromised by a distant-sounding, woolly sound.

The French sopranos have a warm, mezzo-like roundness even when they're floating their top notes, unlike the whiter-toned sopranos of Tenebrae. The fiendishly high E that ends the piece on the longed-for word 'liberté' is a test for every choir, and here two brave sopranos top the chord with a golden sheen rather than a piercing blow. These bright voices respond instinctively to the colours in the text and the emotional impact of their final *ffff* phrase is overwhelming. The recording, made in RIFFX Studios near Paris in May 2018, emphasizes the ebb and flow of the two choirs and the text is crystal clear.

GERALDINE ARESTEANU, KLAUS J A MELLENTHIN



Double choir virtuosity: Marcus Creed directs the ecstatic *Épithalame* by (below) André Jolivet

Continue the journey...

We suggest five works to explore after Poulenc's Figure humaine...

After *Figure humaine*, **Poulenc** returned to Éluard's verse in 1944 with *Un soir de neige*. Setting four short poems, it begins in extreme despair, 'woods robbed by the ravages of winter' while prey is pursued by wolves. Again, the work ends with hope, as 'grass finds the sky' and the apparent prison crumbles. Poulenc's succinct and only slightly understated style here has a powerful effect. (**Tenebrae/Nigel Short** *Signum SIGCD197*).

André Jolivet's ecstatic *Épithalame* (1953), written 'for a vocal orchestra of a dozen parts', was the French composer's gift to his wife on the occasion of their 20th wedding anniversary. Its exultant mood is effectively a continuation of Poulenc's 'Liberté', as well as a further demonstration of the remarkable potential and virtuosity of a large *a cappella* group divided into six female and six male voices. (**SWR Vokalensemble Stuttgart/Marcus Creed** *Carus CAR83445*).

American composer ***William Schuman***'s three Walt Whitman settings, *Carols of Death* (1958), are meditations on human mortality. Though written for the standard four-voice choir (soprano, alto, tenor and bass), they share with Poulenc's *a cappella* masterpiece an inward and often unearthly quality. (**Queens' College Chapel Choir, Cambridge/Rupert Jordan** *Guild GMCD7155*).

More wry in character is ***Britten***'s *Sacred and Profane*, *a cappella* settings of medieval texts he composed in 1975, the penultimate year of his life. Its first two pieces in particular – 'St Godric's Hymn' and 'I mon waxe wod' – strongly recall *Figure humaine* in the flavour of their harmonies. As the final chorus faces mortality and death, the work ends on a distinct upbeat, if one less exalted than Poulenc's. (**The Sixteen/Harry Christophers** *Coro COR16159*).

> Henze's *Orpheus behind the wire* ends with a hymn to 'Freedom!'

Close to Poulenc's work in both form and spirit is ***Henze***'s *Orpheus behind the wire* (1981-83). Again using a 12-part chorus, this evocatively sets poems by the English playwright Edward Bond, starting with Orpheus in a hell that is a repressive authoritarian state. The final chorus hymns a world where poverty and repression are no more, when the music of Orpheus may bring 'Triumph…Freedom!' (**Danish National Radio Chamber Choir/Stefan Parkman** *Chandos CHAN 8963*).

Reviews

110 CDs, Books & DVDs rated by expert critics

Welcome

Philip Glass has just celebrated his 85th birthday and the American composer shows no sign of slowing down. Nor does composer John Williams, for that matter; he just turned 90. We tip our hats to the former with a trio of reviews, including that of his 14th Symphony, while the latter features in a new box set of recordings with the Boston Pops. We've also a stunning recording of songs by Kaija Saariaho (who turns 70 later this year), our top choice in Choral and Song on p78, and a new opera from Joseph Phibbs (still a bright young thing at 48).

Beyond that we've everything from Byrd to Beethoven, the usual Books and Brief Notes, plus round-ups of cherishable archive recordings and some inspiring World music.

Michael Beek *Reviews editor*

This month's critics

Nicholas Anderson, Michael Beek, Kate Bolton-Porciatti, Geoff Brown, Michael Church, Oliver Condy, Christopher Cook, Martin Cotton, Christopher Dingle, Misha Donat, Jessica Duchen, Rebecca Franks, George Hall, Malcolm Hayes, Julian Haylock, Claire Jackson, Daniel Jaffé, Berta Joncus, Erik Levi, Natasha Loges, Andrew McGregor, David Nice, Roger Nichols, Bayan Northcott, Steph Power, Anthony Pryer, Paul Riley, Michael Tanner, Sarah Urwin Jones, Kate Wakeling, Helen Wallace, Alexandra Wilson, Barry Witherden

KEY TO STAR RATINGS

★★★★★ Outstanding
★★★★ Excellent
★★★ Good
★★ Disappointing
★ Poor

RECORDING OF THE MONTH

Kloetzel and Koenig's benchmark Beethoven

Malcolm Hayes thinks this performance of the great composer's works for cello and piano is a masterclass in musicianship

Beethoven

Cello Sonata No. 1 in F; No. 2 in G minor; No. 3 in A; No. 4 in C; No. 5 in D; Sonata for Piano with Horn or Cello in F, Op. 17; 12 Variations WoO 45; 12 Variations, Op. 66; 7 Variations, WoO 46

Jennifer Kloetzel (cello), Robert Koenig (piano)

Avie AV2450 168:51 mins (3 discs)

If only more cellists played like this – and at this level of ceaseless musicianship. We live in an age when many of Jennifer Kloetzel's soloist colleagues evidently feel the need to perform concertos and chamber music alike with relentless and turbocharged weight of tone, but as always, there are different ways of doing things. This release makes that memorably clear.

Kloetzel bases her musical life in California, where she combines a teaching position at University of California Santa Barbara with concerto and recital engagements. The tone she draws from her chosen instrument (a 1901 Camillo Mandelli) is warm, unexaggerated and beautifully focused, avoiding any sense of hectoring even in Beethoven's trademark rumbustious passage-work. The result is a masterclass (in the happiest non-academic sense) in how to engage with the most powerful creative personality that music has known, while at the same time drawing the listener's awareness into each work's inner processes and world of expression, rather than pinning back one's ears in the process. And there is a true musical team at work here. Robert Koenig's choice of a mellow-voiced Blüthner piano for his alert accompanying connects exactly with Kloetzel's artistry: when the two instruments are

A love for Ludwig: Jennifer Kloetzel's performance draws the listener in

GREGORY GOODE

in dovetailed duet, there are moments when they seem to sound fascinatingly alike.

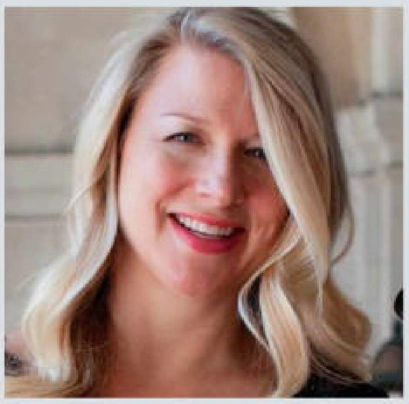
The collection's title is taken from the theme of the busily entertaining variations on Handel's 'See the Conquering Hero comes' (there are two other sets of the same species, based on themes from Mozart's *The Magic Flute*). The 'Conquering Hero' idea also relates to William Meredith's statement to Kloetzel, quoted by her before his booklet note, that 'if there were only the five cello sonatas Beethoven left of all his music, these alone would have cemented his place in history.' The claim is not ridiculous. The cycle ranges from the headstrong rhythmic energy of the two early Op. 5 works, through the inner immensity of the middle-period A major Sonata Op. 69, to the late Op. 102 pair where the music seems to have moved into new and remote worlds that only Beethoven ever saw.

Kloetzel's playing searches out every corner of the work's emotional depth

Kloetzel's playing responds unerringly to the shift of creative tone at each stage of the composer's development. In the Op. 5 pair of sonatas, a real sense comes across of how startling the music's boldly expanded scale and sheer firepower must have sounded to its first listeners. The central-period A major Sonata, inscribed by Beethoven 'Inter lacrimas et luctum' (Amid tears and grief), was written in the wake of his rejected wish to marry Countess Josephine Brunswick; Kloetzel's playing searches out every corner of the work's emotional depth and expansive mastery. And her delivery of the slow movement of Op. 102 No. 2 conveys mesmerisingly that this is one of Beethoven's supreme statements. She also includes the Sonata Op. 17, first published as being 'for Horn or Violoncello' and probably arranged as such by Beethoven. It's non-vintage material, but certainly makes up for this in scarcity value.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

An interview with Jennifer Kloetzel



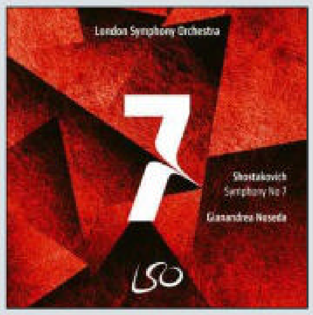
Your love of Beethoven goes way back, doesn't it?
I was eight when my teacher put the first movement of the Second Sonata on my stand. I was baffled, and then a few weeks later in a class there was a pianist, so I got to hear it with piano for the first time. That was the beginning of my true obsession with the cleverness of Beethoven. It's like layers of an onion that you peel back; I'll dig and dig, pieces I've played over and over again, and I'll notice something I hadn't before.

Why did you want to include the Op. 17 Horn Sonata?
Most people release the three sets of variations and the five sonatas and that makes perfect sense. I was just digging around and I noticed some people included other things, and that made me turn the page and look a little further. When the Horn Sonata was sent to the publisher, a cello part accompanied it that Beethoven apparently wrote. It's a little bit simpler sounding than the other sonatas, but it really made sense to me to fit it in.

Why did you choose the 'Conquering Hero' title?
It's funny – when I was first trying that on for size, people thought it sounded like 'here we have Kloetzel and Koenig, the Germans conquering!'. But it comes from the opening work, the Handel Variations. It's all about triumphant joy, not vanquishing people. Of course, Handel was one of Beethoven's heroes, so it's a nod to all of that. Yes, there are dark moments in these pieces, but overall my feeling about them is that they're something fabulous that we should all spend time and behold.

Orchestral

ORCHESTRAL CHOICE



An impressive Leningrad from the LSO

This live recording of Shostakovich 7 is vivid and exceptional, says *Erik Levi*

Shostakovich

Symphony No. 7
London Symphony Orchestra/ Gianandrea Noseda
LSO Live LSO 0859 (CD/SACD) 75:00 mins

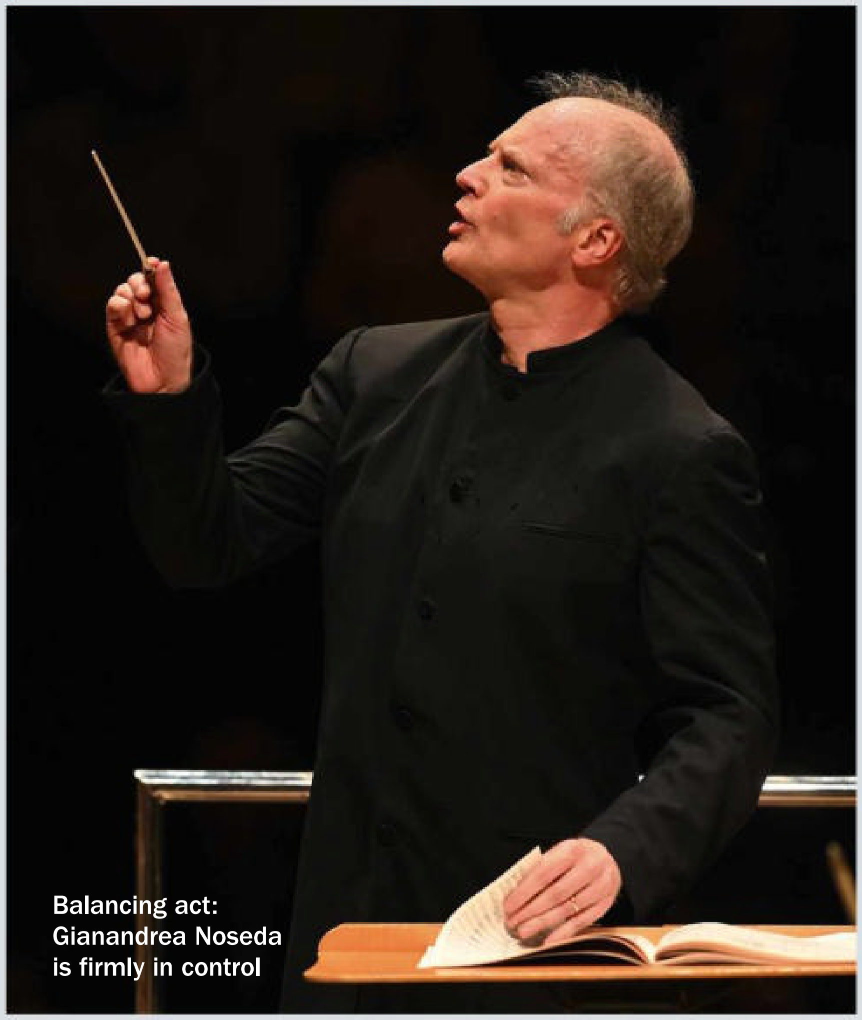
Recorded in remarkably vivid sound at the Barbican in December 2019, this is an exceptionally fine performance. Gianandrea Noseda brings a tremendous sense of strength and purpose to the opening, and the ensuing lyrical episode evokes a real sense of nostalgia before this pastoral idyll is shattered by the emergence of the invasion theme. Starting at a barely audible treble *pianissimo*, Noseda builds up this section with phenomenal control of tempo and orchestral timbre so that when the extra brass instruments enter the fray at the change of key, the effect is absolutely terrifying.

> The LSO's principal wind players excel in their many solos

The LSO's principal wind players excel in their many solos, in particular the mournful bassoon lament near the end of the first movement, the sinister bass clarinet and double bassoon and pleading oboe in the second, and the warmly lyrical flute in the third. I also admire Noseda's balancing of wind, brass and harp timbres in the Stravinskian opening to the *Adagio* – a passage that on some other recordings can so easily sound fuzzy.

In the Finale's opening section, Noseda ensures structural cogency is maintained during the increasingly furious outbursts of energy, and the snapped string pizzicatos that follow have tremendous bite. Thereafter, Noseda takes something of a gamble by taking the *Moderato* at an extremely steady tempo, thereby allowing the tension to dissipate at times. Nevertheless, the defiant return of the opening theme of the Symphony at the close, although lacking the sheer theatrical pizzazz of Leonard Bernstein's celebrated 1988 DG recording, still has considerable presence.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★


Balancing act: Gianandrea Noseda is firmly in control

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Beethoven

Symphonies, Vol. 2: Nos 6-9
Sara Gouzy (soprano), Salome Fischer (mezzo-soprano), Mingjie Lei (tenor), Manuel Walser (baritone); La Capella Nacional de Catalunya; Le Concert des Nations/Jordi Savall
Alia Vox AVSA 9946 (CD/SACD) 145:16 mins (3 discs)

No Jordi Savall project is undertaken lightly; least of all a complete symphony cycle intended to coincide with the Beethoven 250 celebrations. Preparations were predictably thorough, the details outlined in one of three essays in the accompanying booklet. But Savall is scarcely trailblazing here: there have been significant period instrument cycles over the past four decades from, to name just three, Norrington, Gardiner and Immerseel aspiring to recapture Beethoven's soundworld, tempos and performance practice. Yet Savall follows these with typical flair notwithstanding, as far as this volume is concerned, the hiatus of the Covid pandemic.

To the core 35 members of L Concert de Nations he's added a further 20 or so young musicians recruited worldwide, and the performances were evolved over a series of 'academies' interrogating every aspect of the score. His interpretive decisions nonetheless feel organic rather than didactic, and the opening movement of the Ninth Symphony emerges as the consummation of a line of first movements stretching from *Eroica* through the Fifth. Paradoxically the 'old' instruments disclose more clearly the foreshadowings of Wagner, Mahler and Bruckner, and it's hard to think of performances that make Beethoven sound so modern. The first two movements of the Sixth are exquisitely paced (not so much the last); the protean energy of the Seventh takes no hostages. Perhaps some elements of the Eighth are a touch overbearing, but, with a superbly-matched quartet of soloists, the finale of the Ninth punches home Schiller's message with a conviction that carries all before it. *Paul Riley*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Haydn

Haydn 2032, Vol. 11 – Au goût parisien: Symphonies Nos 2, 24, 82 'The Bear' and 87
Kammerorchester Basel/ Giovanni Antonini
Alpha Classics ALPHA 688 80:27 mins

Haydn's six 'Paris' symphonies Nos 82-87, commissioned in 1784 by the Masonic Concert de la Loge Olympique, were a huge success in the French capital: here

Painstaking performance: the Finnish Radio Symphony is minutely detailed in Larcher

was the wittiest and most brilliantly inventive symphonic music Haydn had yet written, played by a virtuoso orchestra that could boast 40 violins and ten basses.

On this new recording, featuring the first and last in the series of symphonies written for Paris, the Basel Chamber Orchestra has around a quarter that number, but only in the opening movement of Symphony No. 82, with its piercing trumpet parts, are the strings in any danger of being overpowered. Its finale's hurdy-gurdy-like drone has earned the symphony its nickname of the 'Bear'. While that work does without a real slow movement, the Symphony No. 87 has a profound *Adagio* with prominent parts – including a couple of mini-cadenzas – for flute, oboe and bassoon. The flute comes even more to the fore in the slow movement of No. 24, which may be the surviving portion from a lost concerto for that instrument.

The early Symphony No. 2 was first issued in Paris in 1764. Curiously, it contains no repeat from beginning to end, but elsewhere Giovanni Antonini observes every single repeat, even though some of them aren't all that convincing. In the finale of the two 'Paris' symphonies (Nos 82 and 87), for instance, the second-half repeat comes as a real shock after the decisively conclusive ending the first time through. But Antonini's characteristically lively performances – part of his ongoing complete Haydn symphonies series – afford much pleasure throughout. *Misha Donat*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

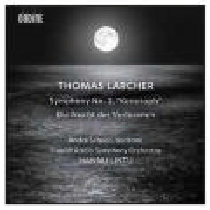
MARK ALLAN, VEIKKO KÄHKÖNEN

Thomas Larcher

Symphony No. 2 'Kenotaph'; Die Nacht der Verlorenen*

*Andrè Schuen (baritone); Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra/ Hannu Lintu

Ondine ODE 1393-2 65:15 mins



Thomas Larcher's Symphony No. 2 started life as a concerto for orchestra, as is evident from its richly woven textures. The subtitle *Kenotaph* identifies it as a memorial to refugees who have drowned while crossing the Mediterranean – an ongoing tragedy that had captured international attention when Larcher was composing the work in 2015. This is not a programmatic piece, although the subject matter can be felt through the frequently unsettling four movements (the *Adagio* in particular evokes seascapes and suffering).

Larcher's language is rooted in the Austro-German symphonic tradition with use of 21st-century colour (for example, the varied percussion – carefully mixed on the palette rather than splashed about as afterthought). The chaotic Gerald Barry-meets-Mahler *Scherzo* is painstakingly realised by the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra; a style reflected in the final *Allegro*. *Kenotaph* was warmly received at its UK premiere at the 2016 Proms, and its first recording deserves a similar reception.

The song cycle *Die Nacht der Verlorenen* (The Night of the Lost) for baritone and large ensemble uses text by Ingeborg Bachmann, a writer who Larcher has set before (*Das Spiel ist aus*). As in *Kenotaph*, the ensemble features some unexpected members, such as accordion and prepared piano. Hannu Lintu ensures that Andrè Schuen's earthy vocals are always uncluttered; the mood is one of relentless devastation ('Ich habe die Wand gesehn und geschrien in meinem weissen weissen Bett, an das keiner kam' – 'I have seen the wall and howled in my white white bed, which no one visited'). *Claire Jackson*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Mendelssohn

Symphonies Nos 1 & 3 'Scottish'

Swedish Chamber Orchestra/ Thomas Dausgaard

BIS BIS-2469 (CD/SACD) 66:26 mins

Mendelssohn was blessed with a ridiculous amount of talent, nurtured in the fertile ground of a cultured family. With his exceptional sensitivity, he conveyed all sides of the emotional spectrum in his music – a medium he found more precisely expressive than words could ever be. Often his works have an extraordinarily driven, nervous energy about them, but they also hold innumerable emotions ranging from charm to introspection, from sorrow to elation and from public grandeur to a fizz of personal joy.

The (official) Symphony No. 1, rarely heard, dates from when he was all of 15. The angst of youth shines through its irrepressible score; at times it is derivative (elements of the finale recall Mozart's Symphony No. 40), but remains never less than engaging. The *Scottish* Symphony, meanwhile, needs no introduction.

Thomas Dausgaard homes in on Mendelssohn's fiery energy, setting the Swedish Chamber Orchestra's playing satisfactorily ablaze. The approach pays dividends in No. 1, which flares out in brilliant technicolour. Nevertheless, perhaps the *Scottish* begins to suffer from a surfeit of the hard drive, so to speak, with tone veering towards the over-aggressive too often and for too long. Some moments here could benefit from a lighter touch, and even a little more vibrato could have brought variety and colour to ameliorate some of the harshness. In short, it is extremely well performed, but a little bit relentless. The recorded sound has plenty of clarity, if at the expense of warmth. *Jessica Duchen*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Ravel

La valse; Ma mère L'Oye; Boléro; Alborada del gracioso; Pavane pour une infante défunte; Valses nobles et sentimentales

Sinfonia of London/John Wilson

Chandos CHSA 5280 (CD/SACD) 83:45 mins

Just play the notes? It is an oft-repeated maxim that Ravel's music requires simply that performers play precisely what is written in his meticulous scores. Of course, that is easier said than done, and not merely due to the often-virtuosic writing. Nonetheless, this superbly played and sumptuously recorded disc from the Sinfonia of London and John Wilson amply demonstrates

Well-paced Ravel: John Wilson oversees an assured performance

the profound benefits of trusting Ravel. Has *Ma mère l'Oye* ever sounded more gorgeous or affecting? Every nuance of 'Laideronnette' is carefully crafted with no sense of fussiness, while the easing into the final shimmering climax of the fairy garden is judged perfectly, the spacious surround sound giving lustre to the iridescent colours.

Wilson's pacing of *Pavane pour une infante défunte* is equally assured, capturing its melancholic nobility. Throughout, innumerable exquisite details catch the ear, such as the delicate dustings of cymbal in the central section of *Alborada del gracioso* or the lithe figurations of the inner strings in the opening of *Valses nobles et sentimentales*.

The slight caveat comes with the works that frame the disc. The opening *La valse* has plenty of style and panache, and the playing is stunning. Yet, rather than careering towards cataclysm, the conclusion is neatly parked. Similarly, Wilson impressively maintains Ravel's speed in *Boléro* unwaveringly beneath the delightfully characterised solos. Tenacity becomes rigidity, though, when the harmonic gear change at the end passes entirely unacknowledged. No crude distortion from Ravel's score is needed. Just a little of the humanity apparent in abundance elsewhere. *Christopher Dingle*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Schubert

Complete Symphonies, plus fragments of symphonies, overtures and orchestral pieces

L'Orfeo Barockorchester/Michi Gaigg

CPO 555 228-2 277:25 mins (4 discs)

How many symphonies did Schubert write? It's a good question, as people say when they don't know the answer. What used to be known as Symphony No. 9, the 'Great', is now 7 or 8 – in this set it's No. 8, though still known as the 'Great'. It occupies the last of these four discs, and lasts for 61 minutes, the longest performance of it I have ever heard. Don't think that means that tempos are slow. It is also the most rapid traversal I've ever heard, but every single repeat is played.

The same applies to all the movements of the completed symphonies, but not, of course, to the several fragments and 'overtures', some of them as short as half a minute. Schubert was a great non-completer, and while some of these snatches are interesting, others seem brief to the point of pointlessness.

However, what concerned me more is this orchestra's sound. It is heavily weighted in favour of winds, and even more emphatically against strings, so that the overall impression of the 'Great' C major is noisily dramatic, almost never lyrical. The one piece where this treatment works is in the 'Unfinished', which creates and maintains a spooky, unnerving quality. Otherwise, the earlier symphonies fare better than the later ones, and overall the performances strike me as even less expressive than historically informed performances normally do. *Michael Tanner*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

British Music for Strings, Vol. 3

Gipps: Cinglemire Garden; **Smyth:** Suite for Strings, Op. 1a; **Spain-Dunk:** Suite in B minor; Lament; **C Warren:** Heather Hill

Südwestdeutsches Kammerorchester Pforzheim/Douglas Bostock

CPO 555 457-2 62:25 mins

Douglas Bostock's love of runmmaging through British composers' cupboards knows no end. Here, he's focused on the numerous women busy at work, if rarely at large, in the late 19th and 20th centuries. Not content with resurrecting and editing Ethel Smyth's Suite for strings, enlarged by the composer from her 1883 Piano Quintet, the conductor also presents a pastoral impression by Ruth Gipps and another by the barely known Constance Warren, who stopped composing, aged 27, in 1932, pursuing a career as a piano teacher. There are also two works by the scarcely more famous Susan Spain-Dunk (1880-1962).

None of these string orchestra works can really be claimed as great discoveries, yet there's much to savour as Bostock's German players brush away the music's dust with elegance and passion. If the movements of Spain-Dunk's miniature suite pass by too quickly to make much impression, her 1934 *Lament, in memory of 'P.A.H.'*, is notable for its vigour, clearly giving thanks for a life rather than mourning its loss. Warren's *Heather Hill*, fetchingly scored, muses over folksy cadences like so many of its British brothers and sisters working in the same field, but there's no personality shortage in Gipps's meatier, more decisive *Cringlemire Garden*, inspired by a Lake District arboretum. Meanwhile, Ethel Smyth's suite alternates between being bustling and graceful, and is always pleasant. *Geoff Brown*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★

Edinburgh International Festival

– Orchestral Series Highlights

Works by Beethoven, Clyne, Maxwell Davies, Mendelssohn and Witter-Johnson

Edinburgh Festival Chorus; BBC Symphony Orchestra/Dalia Stasevska; Chineke! Orchestra/William Eddins; Royal Scottish National Orchestra/Thomas Søndergård, Elim Chan; BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra/Marin Alsop

Linn Records CKD686 (digital download only) 59:11 mins

This recording of orchestral highlights from the 2021 Edinburgh International Festival is one of five Linn releases, including chamber music and opera, celebrating last year's out-of-the-ordinary event. It's a snapshot of concerts played on sports fields in socially-distanced outdoor constructions with the usual diverse, if largely UK-based array of ensembles and artists flitting through the capital.

But it's all too fleeting, largely due to the piecemeal programme which pits complete works against sections of others. Anna Clyne's *PIVOT*, a dystopian flit of Scottish folk tunes and dissonance, is the opening item in this world premiere performance under Dalia Stasevska and the BBC Symphony Orchestra, as it was for the festival; and a Chineke! commission, Ayanna Witter-Johnson's *Blush*, is tightly played under William Eddins, full of locomotive energy.

Peter Maxwell Davies's *A Spell for Green Corn* is superb here under Marin Alsop and the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, although the segue into the wedding march from Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* jars. The scant four highlights from that work and Harriet Walter's evocative, finely poised narration alongside Thomas Søndergård and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra's vivid playing, suggest something rather magical – if only we could hear more of it. *Sarah Urwin Jones*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Jean Sibelius: Works for Violin & Piano
Fenella Humphreys (violin)
Joseph Tong (piano)

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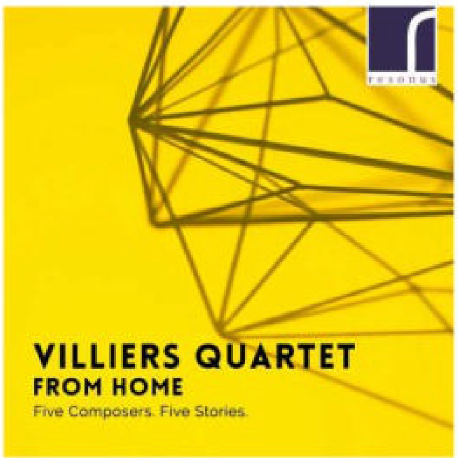
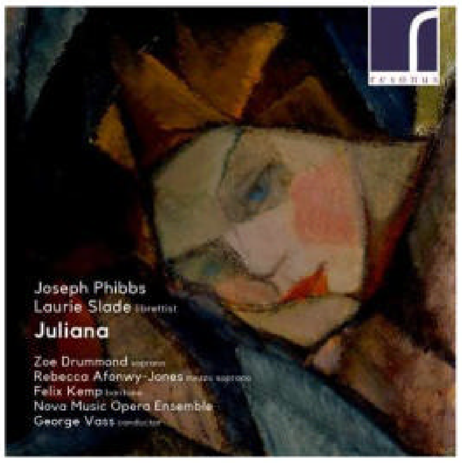
Ernest Moeran: Chamber Music
Fidelio Trio

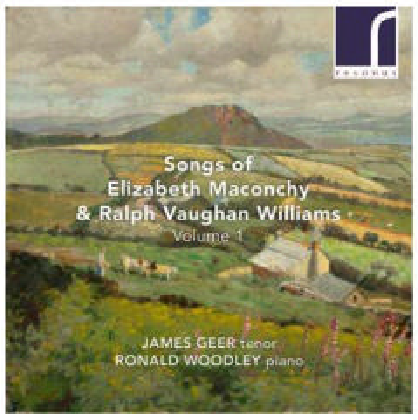
coming soon...



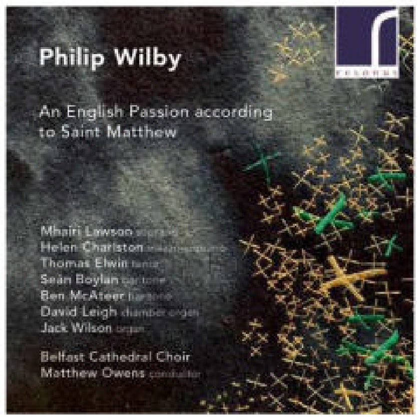
From Home: Five Composers. Five Stories.
Villiers Quartet



Joseph Phibbs: Juliana
Nova Music Opera Ensemble
George Vass (conductor)



Songs of Machonchy & Vaughan Williams
James Geer (tenor)
Ronald Woodley (piano)



Philip Wilby: an English Passion
Belfast Cathedral Choir
Matthew Owens (conductor)

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Concerto

CONCERTO CHOICE

Melancholy moods in an engaging soundworld

Steph Power enjoys the enigmatic nature of these Double and Triple Concertos from Kalevi Aho

A lyrical Triple: Storioni Trio stands out in Aho's concerto

Kalevi Aho

Double Concerto for cor anglais, harp and orchestra; Triple Concerto for violin, cello, piano and chamber orchestra

Dimitri Mestdag (cor anglais), Anneleen Lenaerts (harp); Storioni Trio; Antwerp Symphony Orchestra/Olari Elts

BIS BIS-2426 (CD/SACD) 59:11 mins

Finn Kalevi Aho (b1949) has composed an astonishing number of concertos since his first, for violin, in 1981. The current total is some 37 across a vast range of instruments, including six double concertos. Of these, the 2014 Double Concerto for cor anglais, harp and orchestra is recorded here alongside the – so far – sole Triple Concerto, for violin, cello, piano and orchestra (2018). The works are markedly different in character, yet both exhibit an underlying enigmatic quality against which an array of moods and textures are explored through an ever-changing post-tonal soundworld. Both are performed with clarity and sweep by the soloists and Antwerp Symphony Orchestra under Olari Elts.

Most intriguing in form is the Double Concerto. Cast in four, through-composed movements, the first is as long as the following three together, and finds the cor anglais (Dimitri Mestdag) and harp (Anneleen Lenaerts) slowly emerging from what Aho describes as 'a distant wind' in an 'empty...cold' landscape. As unpitched sounds coalesce into chords and motifs, build and then finally subside at the work's close, the soloists at once shape and respond to the changing environment without being subsumed or dominated.

> Both concertos are performed with clarity and sweep

The Triple Concerto forces are more equally pitted – and emanate immediate warmth thanks to the lullaby, dedicated to Aho's granddaughter, which suffuses the first movement and reappears at points in the ensuing three. Yet, through contrasting emotional terrain, there is ambivalence here too in a bracing melancholy which recalls Shostakovich in the Storioni Trio's lyrical hands.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

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JS Bach/Johan Ullén

Violin Concertos

Christian Svarfvar (violin); London Philharmonic Orchestra/Johan Ullén

Rubicon RCD 1053 56:32 mins

Max Richter's re-compositions of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* inspired violinist Christian Svarfvar to ask Johan Ullén for similar reworkings of Bach. The result falls between two stools: when Bach's harmonic structure is preserved, the music has direction and purpose; otherwise it can fall into note-spinning.

The E major Concerto's first movement begins not at the beginning but with material from later on – which then doesn't go anywhere. When we do get a sizeable chunk of pretty much unmediated Bach, it comes as a breath of fresh air. The slow movement starts more promisingly, taking Bach's pauses in the orchestral texture as a jumping-off point, but then becomes soupily romantic, with soaring violin lines – not always completely secure – and lush harmonies which become increasingly anonymous.

The tendency to build up dynamics in repeated phrases to reach a climax at the end of movements, or its opposite, the slow fade, are other fingerprints. Ullén mentions the influence of pop, minimalism and film music – all of which too often overpower Bach. Taking small cells of existing music to create something new has an honourable pedigree, but this is like fake Baroque background music for a film. *Martin Cotton*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Brahms • Maier • Röntgen

Violin Concertos

Cecilia Zilliacus (violin); Malmö Symphony Orchestra; Västerås Sinfonietta/Kristiina Poska

dB Productions db CD 202 79:05 mins

I suspect the main points of interest for readers here are the concertos by Amanda Maier (1853-94) and her husband Julius Röntgen (1855-1932). Maier was by all accounts a gifted violinist (she played the Brahms Concerto) as well as a

talented composer – she studied with Röntgen's father Engelbert and married Julius in 1880. Both moved in the same musical circle as Brahms for a time, along with the likes of Clara Schumann, Joseph Joachim and Julius Klengel (composer of the iconic 12-cello classic, *Hymnus*). Tantalisingly, all that survives of Maier's concerto is a 17-minute opening movement, which fascinatingly sounds like a musical missing link between the Schumann Concerto (also in D minor) and the Brahms.

Swedish virtuoso Cecilia Zilliacus, whom seasoned collectors will know from her fine recordings of the Nielsen Concerto and other works by Maier (also for dB), produces a pure, sweet sound, ideal for the score's moments of lyrical repose, and the tricky cadenza which she shapes with a soaring eloquence reminiscent of gifted Szeryng pupil, Susanne Lautenbacher. Zilliacus proves no less persuasive in Röntgen's three-movement F sharp minor Concerto, composed in 1931, shortly before his death the following year. Sounding for all the world like a work from half-a-century before, shades of Dvořák infuse the predominately Brahmsian landscape.

Not surprisingly, Zilliacus sounds equally at home in the Brahms Concerto, especially in the ravishing central movement. In all three works she receives engagingly sympathetic support from Kristiina Poska, who brings even the most generic of orchestral gestures sparklingly to life. *Julian Haylock*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Britten • Finzi • Milhaud • R Strauss

Britten: Young Apollo; **Finzi:** Eclogue; **Milhaud:** Le Carnaval d'Aix; **Strauss:** The Bourgeois Gentleman – Suite
Joshua Pierce (piano); Slovak State Chamber Orchestra of Zilina; Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra/ Kirk Trevor
MSR Classics MS1756 69:11 mins

The *raison d'être* for this slightly miscellaneous-seeming choice of works is that the piano plays a prominent but not quite concerto-like role in all of them. In *Young Apollo*, Britten's brief, bright paean to the tonic chord of A major, its function is to add florid arpeggios and to define bouncy rhythms; in Milhaud's jolly *Le Carnaval d'Aix* – 12 very short movements on traditional tunes and dances – the piano is more integrated into his typically chunky orchestration. Gerald Finzi's *Eclogue* – all that remains of a projected piano concerto – is cast rather as a calm, and not-so calm dialogue between piano and strings, whereas in Strauss's neo-baroque confection drawn from his incidental music for Molière's comedy, *Le bourgeois gentilhomme*, the piano only features in five of the nine movements, sometimes in brief solos, sometimes in a more continuo-like way.

The Britten goes well enough with flamboyant roulades from the US pianist Joshua Pierce and incisive playing from the Slovak State Chamber Orchestra of Zilina, while the American conductor Kirk Trevor secures an appropriately brash energy in the Milhaud – it is not very subtle music. In the Finzi *Eclogue*, Pierce is more forward-moving in the opening solo than one usually hears, and the reading, with the strings of the State Radio Symphony Orchestra of Bratislava, leans towards intensity rather than repose. And, despite some nicely turned orchestral solos, the Strauss suite is a little disappointing, lacking the wit and sweetness of the best performances, and not helped by a slightly edgy and less than ideally balanced recording. Altogether a mixed bag. *Bayan Northcott*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★

A good fit: David Grimal is at home in French works

JULIEN MIGNOT

Chausson • Enescu • Ravel

Chausson: Poème; **Ravel:** Tzigane; **Enescu:** Caprice Roumain
David Grimal (violin); Les Dissonances
La Dolce Volta LDV 97 54:03 mins

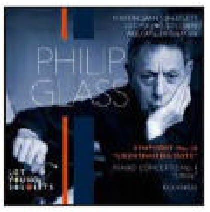
The plan of this recording is simple but meaningful. We start with late 19th-century France, move on to a mixture of France and Hungary/Romania and end with Romania entire. Chausson's *Poème* for violin and orchestra which, in its gentle melancholy, has *fin de siècle* written all over it, is perhaps the nearest he came in his short life to being a great composer. The harmony, while clearly deriving from that of Franck, is never heavy-footed and coalesces beautifully with the work's long melodies. Ravel's *Tzigane*, which adopts the slow/fast (*lassú/friss*) form of the Hungarian *csárdás*, was inspired by the playing of the Hungarian violinist Jelly d'Arányi, which he followed up by studying Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsodies*. There are melodies here, but Ravel cunningly intertwines them with 'exotic' slides and dissonances and much of the piece's excitement lies in the way our brain untangles the mix. But, as Grimal notes, the result is by the composer's admission much more Ravel than Hungary.

Finally, the all-Romanian piece is Enescu's *Caprice Roumain*. Enescu finished only the first of the four movements, the composer Cornel Tăranu orchestrating the other three and completing the fourth. I wish I could agree with Grimal that 'It's a splendid piece of music.' After three listenings, I still hanker for something, during its 28 minutes, in the shape of a tune rather than virtuosic gestures. Of the violinist's calibre there is no doubt whatever and he is as much at home in the Chausson as in the rest of his programme. *Roger Nichols*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Philip Glass

Piano Concerto No. 1 'Tirol'; Symphony No. 14 'Liechtenstein Suite'†; Echorus
Martin James Bartlett (piano); LGT Young Soloists/Alexander Gilman, †Mark Messenger
Orange Mountain Music OMM 0161 53:00 mins



In the opening movement to his First Piano Concerto, Glass borrows a snippet from a Tyrolean folk piece – revisited in the third movement – giving the work its nickname, the *Tirol*. Meanwhile, the second, more substantial, middle movement steals from the soundtrack to *The Truman Show*, which Glass had composed two years before completing the concerto in 2000. Development of the melody that originally accompanies Truman on his great escape is very subtle – some might argue too subtle. Soloist Martin James Bartlett, who won BBC Young Musician in 2014, is exceptional. There is thoughtful interplay between pianist and ensemble, the LGT Young Soloists – a group of 12-23 year-olds supported by the Liechtenstein private bank.

There's welcome contrast to be found in Glass's new 14th Symphony, the *Liechtenstein Suite*, composed for the LGT Young Soloists to mark their patron's centenary. Glass honoured the brief that every instrument group should have a solo part, and the work was premiered last autumn at the Royal College of Music and this first recording was made around the same time at Abbey Road. Balance is a minor issue in places: the bass section in the second and third movements tends to be overwhelmed by the upper violins. *Claire Jackson*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Opera

OPERA CHOICE

Sandrine Piau casts a spell in this Handel collection

The French soprano digs deep to bring a gallery of sorcerer-heroines to vivid life, says ***Berta Joncus***

Vocal masterclass: Sandrine Piau is a powerhouse singer

Handel

Enchantresses: arias from Lotario, Rinaldo, Alcina, Giulio Cesare in Egitto etc; Concerto Grosso No. 4 in A minor, Op. 6 – excerpts etc.
Sandrine Piau (soprano); Les Paladins/Jérôme Correas
Alpha Classics ALPHA 765 72:08 mins

In this dazzling album, Sandrine Piau crowns her legacy as a Baroque prima donna. Here Piau mines her intimate knowledge of the material to bring startling originality to Handel's sorceress-heroine arias. You may recognise a title, but much of the music will be new, as her informed additions subvert the original melodies and unleash a ferocious vocalism. Piau's happy waywardness is matched by Les Paladins, whose director Jérôme Correas is a longstanding musical partner of hers.

Piau chose her numbers to probe the feelings of what she calls 'powerful, often wounded women', whose ability to enchant – musically, erotically, rhetorically – is their downfall. Her facility for conveying steeliness and vulnerability within the same aria is striking. Thus the abandoned Alcina's trembling brokenness in the opening of 'Ah! mio cor!' gives way to the raw muscle of Piau's sudden *sforzando*s, and in the arcs and plunges she inserts into the repeat of the aria's first section. Thus, too, the triumphant Melissa ('Desterò dall'empia dite') strides grandly through registers in rivalry with the solo trumpet part, yet turns soft and subtle in Piau's bridge passages. Correas and the band add their own magic: whirlwind tempos, extravagant continuo realisations and slightly off-beat entries keep us guessing what the instrumentalists will do next. Handel confections have rarely been more deliciously served.

> Piau's facility for conveying steeliness and vulnerability in the same aria is striking

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

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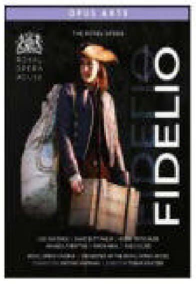
Beethoven

Fidelio (DVD)
Lise Davidsen, David Butt Philip, Georg Zeppenfeld, Simon Neal; Orchestra of the Royal Opera House/ Antonio Pappano; dir. Tobias Kratzer (London, 2020)
Opus Arte DVD: OA1334D; Blu-ray: OABD7288D 133 mins



Tobias Kratzer's production was planned as the Royal Opera's contribution to 2020's Beethoven anniversary celebrations; but following a successful first night co-starring Jonas Kaufmann as Florestan, Covid reduced its run. Fortunately, and with a different tenor – David Butt Philip – the staging was filmed on 13 March, and it remains a major achievement.

The production itself is a controversial one. As Kratzer explains in a five-minute extra in which cast and creatives discourse on the opera, he regards *Fidelio* as a work in two very different halves – the first act a historical period-piece, the second a symbolic situation which he likens to a political essay. In practice this means that the first act plays in a realistic 18th-century France (the preference for that country over Spain leading to anomalies in itself), while the second is staged before and eventually with the involvement of a chorus in contemporary dress who could be members of some modern parliament. The results are mixed: always thoughtful, often rewarding, but sometimes ineffective; having Pizarro show his villainy by crushing Marzelline's caged canary in his hand is a crass low point.

Few complaints about the musical performance, which is distinguished from the point of view of Covent Garden's chorus and orchestra as well as conductor Antonio Pappano, who brings dignity and dynamism to his task. Lise Davidsen makes an ideal Leonore, perfectly matched by the shining tone of her tenor partner. Simon Neal is an impressive Pizarro, with Georg Zeppenfeld an impeccable Rocco and both Amanda Forsythe's Marzelline and Robin Tritschler's Jaquino as fine as could be. *George Hall*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
PICTURE & SOUND ★★★★★

Mozart

Mozart x 3: Opera arias

Elsa Dreisig (soprano); Basel Chamber Orchestra/Louis Langrée

Erato 9029641225 58:27 mins

Elsa Dreisig's Sifare in Mark Minkowski's recent recording of *Mitridate* whets the appetite for more Mozart from this young Danish-born soprano. If ambition were enough then her decision to sing arias by the three principal women characters in Mozart's three Da Ponte operas (hence the title) would deserve bravas and bouquets. Yet, you need rather more – especially a voice that naturally encompasses what we now think of as the soprano and the mezzo ranges.

Dreisig has a winningly silvery tone for Countess Almaviva in 'Dove Sono', which is lyrical with hints of nostalgia. However, in 'Come scoglio', Fiordiligi's hymn to rock-like constancy, you need to hear the voice hitting the chest register with a thump. And is Dreisig a tad too toothsome in Donna Elvira's 'Mi tradi'? Where's the woman who has endured so much in pursuing Giovanni? The lower notes are there, but they lack gravity.

Dreisig knows how much Mozart's recitatives tell us about his characters, and she makes the most of Dorabella's histrionics in the introduction to her aria 'Smanie implacabili', even if her diction here and elsewhere is a little smudged. She has splendid theatrical partners in Louis Langrée and the Basel Chamber Orchestra, who field a stylish basset clarinet player in 'Non più di fiori' from *La Clemenza di Tito*. *Christopher Cook*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Joseph Phibbs

Juliana

Zoe Drummond, Felix Kemp, Rebecca Afonwy-Jones; Nova Music Opera Ensemble/George Vass

Resonus RES10290 78:43 mins

It's no surprise that Strindberg's 1888 tragedy *Miss Julie* has been adapted many times, including for the operatic stage. With a three-hander cast and one-act domestic setting, its themes of class and gender oppression continue to resonate, offering rich potential for contemporary social observation and comment.

Updating the story from servant exploitation by the aristocracy to immigrant-worker exploitation by the plutocracy, *Juliana* nonetheless has a strong sense of continuity with the past – not least in the markedly post-Britten soundworld and music-dramatic style of composer Joseph Phibbs and librettist Laurie Slade. The score is brilliantly written, with a spaciousness and sure sense of timing that encourages Zoe Drummond (Juliana) and Felix Kemp (Juan) to fully vocally and dramatically inhabit their characters; at the same time allowing the equally excellent Rebecca Afonwy-Jones (Kerstin) to rise above the limitations of her witness role, and the Nova Music Opera Ensemble to shine under conductor George Vass.

There is of course a long operatic tradition of cruelty, misogyny, violence and suicide being expressed through beauty, here embracing a translucent dissonance and (less comfortably) Latin dance. Indeed, the internal conflict that such a paradox produces in the listener can be highly effective in relaying such themes – and this is a slick retelling, with subtle nods to Stravinsky's *Rite* in its Midsummer sex scene. Yet there is something disquieting about the seeming casualness with which Juliana's sexual abuse by her father is added to a narrative that doesn't quite critique the male power it confirms. *Steph Power*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Verdi

Rigoletto (DVD)

Javier Camarena, Luca Salsi, Enkeleda Kamani, Alessio Cacciamani; Orchestra e Coro del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino/Riccardo Frizza; dir. Davide Livermore (Florence, 2021)

Dynamic DVD: 37921; Blu-ray: 57921 130 mins

Recorded in February 2021 with a skeleton audience, this impressive performance of *Rigoletto* will now be seen by far more people – and deservedly so. Javier Camarena, a star of the bel canto repertoire, eschews the 'bravado' approach taken by many tenors and brings a beautiful light, silvery tone to the role of the Duke. His voice pairs perfectly with that of Enkeleda Kamani, a young Albanian singer surely destined for great things. Her vocal ease and purity of line, particularly in 'Tutte le feste al tempio', is something to behold, as is her naturalness in characterising Gilda as, first, an insouciant teenager and later a rape victim (for it is made graphically clear that that is what has taken place). Compelling, too, is Luca Salsi's believable portrayal of Rigoletto: hollow-voiced as he cowers at Monterone's curse; furiously vengeful at the end of Act II.

Davide Livermore's production is reasonably conventional, but with imaginative flourishes aplenty. Gilda is incarcerated in a laundry (we are in the 1950s or early 1960s), not noticing as the Duke silences Giovanna with a gun. Sparafucile's inn is a sophisticated den of iniquity, just the sort of place that would hold a glamorous allure for a naïve young girl. The desolate finale unfolds on a subway station platform. Masks on chorus members just about work, in the ominous underworld in which *Rigoletto* takes place, but here's hoping we'll see an end to them in fully staged performances soon. *Alexandra Wilson*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
PICTURE & SOUND ★★★★

Mirrors

Arias etc by Broschi, Graun, Handel, Telemann, Vinci et al

Jeanine De Bique (soprano); Concerto Köln/Luca Quintavalle

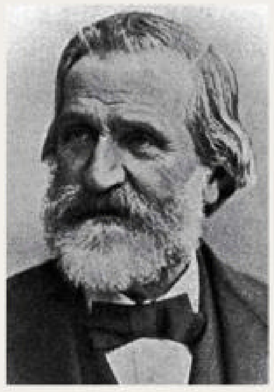
Berlin Classics 0302017BC 64:39 mins

Many of us first encountered Jeanine De Bique at the BBC Proms of 2017 when she gave a thrillingly rapid and vocally vertiginous account of 'Rejoice' from Handel's *Messiah*. In this debut recording she focuses again upon the Baroque, but this very talented Trinidadian soprano definitely has many more strings to her bow, including Mozart, Weber, Gershwin, Caribbean folk music and Arvo Pärt.

The title *Mirrors* symbolises the ways in which the female heroines of the opera arias are reflected through her interpretations, or through contrasting settings of the same scene by different composers. The versions of the Alcina aria 'Mi restano' by Handel and Boschi demonstrate the latter, and De Bique clearly finds Boschi's fluid phrasing more interesting than Handel's lumpy efforts on this occasion. Her impressive breath control so often draws us in to the continuity of the melodic lines (Handel's 'Se pietà'), and her vocal acrobatics are bright and dynamically flexible.

The problem with Baroque decoration is that it is rarely specifically expressive. This does not matter in the bravura military style of Handel's 'L'alma mia fra' (superbly negotiated by De Bique), but in Graun's 'L'empio rigor' the personal sense of defiance and rage has to be provided by the grain of the singer's voice, which sometimes needs to sacrifice a little of its perfect technique. That said, this is a terrific debut ably supported by some stylish instrumental playing. *Anthony Pryer*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★



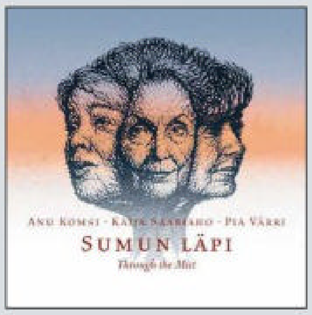
BACKGROUND TO…

Verdi's *Rigoletto*

By the time Giuseppe Verdi got to *Rigoletto*, he was firmly established as a master of opera. Commissioned by Venice's La Fenice in 1850, the opera received its premiere there in 1851. Its composition was somewhat up to the wire and its genesis fraught with problems. Based on Victor Hugo's controversial 1832 play *Le roi s'amuse*, *Rigoletto* almost never made it to the stage. However, the composer and librettist Francesco Maria Piave made enough revisions to appease censors who felt the story to be immoral. It was hugely popular and soon secured its place in the Italian repertoire.

SANDRINE EXPILLY, GETTY

CHORAL & SONG CHOICE



Poetry and power from Kaija Saariaho

Steph Power **is blown away by this set of the Finnish composer's song cycles**

Kaija Saariaho

Preludi-Tunnustus-Postludi; Leino Songs; Du gick, flög; Il Pleut; Saarikoski Songs
Anu Komsi (soprano), Pia Värri (piano)
ColoraMaestro CM 01 52:36 mins

Even without Kaija Saariaho's clear and unassuming programme notes, it would be evident from this breathtaking album that poetry and the soprano voice have been central to her composing life – and that soprano Anu Komsi has been a significant collaborator, here joined by her own longterm artistic partner, pianist Pia Värri.

From the miniature student triptych *Preludi-Tunnustus-Postludi* (1980), via *Du gick, flög* (1982) and *Il Pleut* (1986) to the *Leino Songs* (2000-07) and world premiere recording of the *Saarikoski Songs* (2013-20), it's a compelling collection spanning Swedish, French and Finnish poems – and painting a vivid portrait of a consummate art-song composer.

> Anu Komsi's vocal and expressive range is astonishing

The vocal and expressive range is astonishing, delivered with a poise and precision that goes to the core of Saariaho's uniquely intense yet ethereal soundworld. Indeed in those early miniatures for example, and 'Sydän' (My Heart, from *Leino Songs*), there's a rawness at times, as composer and performers alike respond to the poems with a ferocity that's extraordinarily direct yet refined and suggestive of worlds of feeling.

Both song cycles stem from commissions by Komsi and represent journeys for Saariaho of some seven years with very contrasting literary figures. The *Leino Songs* step into the poet's 'rather grandiloquent world' to locate his delicacy and darker urgency with a fineness that resonates through devotion and rage. Completed during Covid lockdown, the *Saarikoski Songs* shimmer with anguish and uncertainty, and a beauty couched in exquisite forms ultimately seen 'without looking though the mist'.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Saariaho's singer: Anu Komsi has been a significant collaborator

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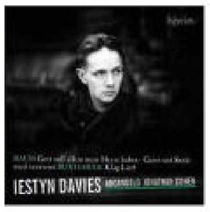
JS Bach • Buxtehude • Schütz

JS Bach: Cantatas Nos 35 & 169; **Buxtehude:** Klag-Lied, BuxWV76b; **Schütz:** Erbarm dich mein, O Herre Gott, SWV 447
Carolyn Sampson (soprano), Iestyn Davies (countertenor), John Mark Ainsley (tenor), Neal Davies (bass); Arcangelo/Jonathan Cohen
Hyperion CDA68375 65:10 mins



Bach wrote four cantatas for solo countertenor, two of which, BWV 35 and 169, incorporate magnificent concerto movements. So, they're the perfect vehicles for the crack team of Iestyn Davies's extraordinary vocal control and Arcangelo's nimble-footedness.

BWV 169, *Gott soll allein mein Herze haben* ('God alone shall have my heart') leaps from the starting blocks with an ebullient sinfonia with organ obbligato that Bach himself probably played at its first performance in Leipzig in 1726, and which he later arranged as the first movement of the E major Keyboard Concerto BWV 1053. It's compellingly paced and played here by Arcangelo who, in later movements, adapt to every one of Davies's vocal inflections, most notably in recitatives. The second aria, 'Stirb in mir', a *sicilienne,* is one of Bach's most breathtaking, and Davies and Arcangelo strike a near-perfect mix of 'Affekt' and rhythmic swing. No less impressive is the performance of BWV 35, *Geist und Seele wird verwirret* (Spirit and Soul become confused) with its two noble sinfonias from a now-lost oboe concerto. The first of its three arias is another *sicilienne*, this time juxtaposing a decorative organ part.

Schütz's anguished 'Erbarm dich', published a century before, and Buxtehude's equally desolate *Klag-Lied* ('Elegy') of 1674 provide a welcome change in mood, both works again showcasing Arcangelo's burnished strings and Davies's natural instinct for drama and heartfelt expression. *Oliver Condy*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Debussy • Hahn

Debussy: La Damoiselle élue, and other choral works; **Hahn:** Etudes Latines and other works
Christiane Karg, Anna Maria Palii (soprano), Angela Brower (alto), Daniel Behle, Nikolaus Pfannkuch (tenor), Tareq Nazmi (bass), Max Hanft, Gerold Huber (piano); Bavarian Radio Chorus/Howard Arman
BR Klassik 900529 55:58 mins

An unusual song recital. This delectable hour in *fin de siècle* France starts not with soprano Christiane Karg, but the suitably fresh-sounding female voices of the Chor des Bayerischen Rundfunks

in the piano version of Debussy's youthful *Salut printemps*. The choir subsequently features in much of what follows, vibrant in tone, yet effortlessly conveying the weightless textures of Clytus Gottwald's challenging arrangement of Debussy's *Les angélus*.

The twin pillars of the disc are Hahn's remarkable *Etudes Latines* in a rare complete performance and Debussy's cantata *La Damoiselle élue*. Heard in an effective two-piano arrangement by the choir's conductor, Howard Arman, the Debussy finds Karg soaring radiantly one moment, intimate and fragile the next. Admittedly, it is necessary neither here nor elsewhere to roll every single 'r' the text has to offer, but this is a small caveat.

A masterful cycle of ten songs, the neglect of the *Etudes Latines* is not surprising. Never one to be bound by convention, Hahn sets seven of Leconte de Lisle's poems for soprano and piano, but variously adds chorus, further solo voices and even another pianist for the other three. Despite this, they are characterised by restraint, none more so than 'Salinum', where just a smattering of notes, exquisitely placed by the ever superlative Gerold Huber, decorates Karg's mesmerising vocal line.

Sadly, with no translations of song texts and repeating Wikipedia's errors about the Debussy, the booklet falls short. As is apparent from the sustained beauty of Hahn's 'Paysage triste', these performances deserve better. *Christopher Dingle*

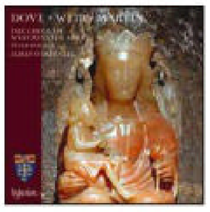
PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Jonathan Dove • Matthew Martin • Judith Weir

Dove: Vast Ocean of Light; Missa brevis; They will rise; **M Martin:** In the midst of thy temple; The Westminster Service; Sitivit anima mea; O Oriens; Behold now, praise the Lord; **Weir:** The true light; His mercy endureth for ever; Truly I tell you

Choir of Westminster Abbey/James O'Donnell; Peter Holder (organ)

Hyperion CDA68350 64:27 mins



This excellent collection of contemporary British choral works is a breath of fresh air, offering a gladly unstuffy vision of church music for the 21st century.

Dove's vocal music seems to have a near-magical capacity to combine sensuous delight with great depth and clarity of expression, all without a hint of sentimentality. The blazing opening anthem 'Vast Ocean of Light' is a fine example of just this and is delivered with radiant timbre from the choir, while the score's glittering accompaniment is performed with notable verve by organist Peter Holder. Dove's Missa brevis that follows is framed by two more introspective movements which in turn highlight the choir's wide expressive range.

It's a treat to find three choral works by Judith Weir collected here, and each is a gem. These varied works traverse everything from the sombre intensity of 'The true light', written in commemoration of the end of the First World War, to the reassuring warmth exuded by the anthem 'Truly I tell you'.

The disc is completed by five fine works by Matthew Martin, which meld complex harmonies with a rich sense of colour and drama. 'O Oriens' is a particular highlight for its imaginative choral textures. Written to be performed with voices scattered throughout the space, the work features a passage of quasi-improvisational vocal layering that is remarkably affecting in its swirling mystery.

Beautifully performed and skilfully recorded, this is an altogether rewarding listen that inspires reflection and devotion. *Kate Wakeling*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Philip Glass

Songs of Milarepa; Songs for Baritone and Piano

Martin Achrainer (baritone), Maki Namekawa (piano)

Orange Mountain OMM 0160 44:18 mins

This fine disc explores ideas of time, truth and existence with mesmeric intensity. Both featured works are adapted from scores for fuller forces, but their reduction to voice and piano only adds to the songs' laser-like power, especially when performed with such colour and clarity.

The album opens with the premiere recording of *Songs of Milarepa*, based on the 'spontaneous poetry' of ancient Tibetan poet

Cantata control: Iestyn Davies stands out in Bach

CHRIS SORENSEN

Jetsun Milarepa. The piece is framed by two songs of meditative introspection, while the central 'Song of the White Staff' reflects on the journey of a walking stick and swirls with pace and heat. The work is paired with three *Songs for Baritone and Piano* which sets Allen Ginsberg and Rūmī. By turns uplifting and rueful, the songs explore everything from the power of music to the injustices of the Vietnam War with hypnotic power.

Baritone Martin Achrainer brings terrific stature and nuance to the performance, while Maki Namekawa has long been a pre-eminent interpreter of Glass's music – indeed, the composer wrote his First Piano Sonata for her. It is no surprise to find her playing is a beautiful match for these scores: subtle, powerful and alert to every tiny shift of colour and mood. A short but powerful collection, this fine album rewards concentrated listening. *Kate Wakeling*

RECORDING ★★★★
PERFORMANCE ★★★★

Haydn

The Creation

Yeree Suh (soprano), Tilman Lichdi (tenor), Matthias Winckhler (baritone); La Capella Reial de Catalunya; Les Concert des Nations/ Jordi Savall

Alia Vox AVSA 9945 (CD/SACD) 96:19 mins (2 discs)

A recording of *The Creation* has been a long-cherished project for Jordi Savall, whose CD of Haydn's *Seven Last Words* in its original orchestral version was made more than 30 years ago, in the Oratory in Cádiz for which it was written. The location for this new *Creation* was the Castle of Cardona, in Savall's native Catalonia – a very reverberant acoustic which suits his highly dramatic account of the opening 'Representation of Chaos' well enough, but which is perhaps a little too lively elsewhere. The chorus, in particular, sounds unfocused and undernourished at times, and the choral movements that end each of the oratorio's three parts really need to carry more weight and grandeur.

That said, Savall's view of the music feels unerringly right throughout, with tempos always judiciously chosen, and Haydn's famous moments – the splendour of the sunrise and the mystery of the rising moon, the depictions of animals, insects and fish, the radiant calm of the Garden of Eden with its highly original sound of three flutes in close harmony – all vividly conveyed. The choice of a fortepiano, rather than the usual harpsichord, as a continuo instrument for the recitatives was

surely sensible for a work that was, after all, composed in the late 1790s.

Savall has assembled a fine cast of soloists, with Tilman Lichdi particularly impressive in the tenor role of Uriel. Despite reservations about the recording venue, this is a performance of Haydn's great oratorio that can be warmly recommended. *Misha Donat*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★

Mozart

Requiem (completed Süssmayr)
Golda Schultz (soprano), Katrin Wundsam (mezzo-soprano), Martin Mitterrutzner (tenor), Nahuel di Pierro (bass); Orchestra e Coro del Teatro Regio di Torino/ Stefano Montenari
Dynamic CDS7932 43:26 mins

When Stefano Montanari, the erstwhile leader of the period instrument Accademia Bizantina, made his Covent Garden debut in 2019 conducting Mozart's *Così fan tutte*, he divided the critics. This account of the Requiem will probably do likewise. His early music hinterland is immediately apparent in the lively tempos and the relish with which hard timpani sticks can lend a little *Don Giovanni*-esque brimstone when required. But briskness can trespass into brusqueness, and he paints with a broad brush that engages with the text at an often-perfunctory level (the angular acerbities of the 'Confutatis' are scarcely assuaged by the usually ameliorating 'voca me').

In going for the dramatic jugular – with a sense that Cherubini is looking over his shoulder – Montanari predictably secures a fevered panic at the start of the Dies Irae, and the fervour of the Sanctus's opening can't be gainsaid (even if the Benedictus proves rather unremitting); but there are moments of rhythmic sloppiness, and the Kyrie threatens to skid out of control in places.

Generally sound, the solo quartet is nonetheless a little sparing with light and shade, though bass Nahuel di Pierro rises majestically to the 'Tuba mirum'. At just 43 minutes and no texts, a package, in short, that short-changes on several levels. *Paul Riley*

PERFORMANCE ★★
RECORDING ★★★

Schubert

Die schöne Müllerin
Iestyn Davies (countertenor), Joseph Middleton (piano)
Signum Classics SIGCD 697 64:22 mins

Countertenor Iestyn Davies celebrates his long association with St John's, Cambridge with this recording of Schubert's 1823 song cycle, exploring the sorrows of a love-lorn miller boy. The liner essay by eminent Schubertian Susan Youens links the songs to Wagnerian Eros and Thanatos, Blake and Chaucer, Goethe, minnesong and of course Schubert's own illness. It's a vast literary-musical landscape, but still, with already dozens of recordings of this monumental cycle, it is difficult to make new discoveries on such a well-trodden path. This highly polished performance from two superb musicians left me wanting a rawer characterisation of this mercurial, vulnerable protagonist.

Strophic songs, with their verbatim repetition of music over several verses, need a vivid, fluent realisation of poetry. Davies can sound a little too elegant and removed, with slightly anglicised German. In the faster songs, more percussive opening consonants and precise intonation are needed to convey the miller's ebullience. The slower songs work beautifully; No. 4 'Danksagung an dem Bach' and No. 18 'Trockne Blumen' suit his approach perfectly, but in faster songs it is difficult to gain purchase on this silken-smooth surface. Middleton brings texture through his imaginative rendition of Schubert's accompaniments. The recording quality is outstandingly clear. *Natasha Loges*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

R Strauss

Zueignung-Lieder
Sarah Wegener (soprano), Götz Payer (piano)
CAvi-music AVI 8553041 60:45 mins

An hour's worth of Strauss Lieder, at least half of them very familiar, is going to merit a special place in the library if the voice is exceptional. That I wouldn't say of Sarah Wegener's soprano: it's bright and open – good for the clarity of the text, as well as fast-vibratoed – but without the exceptional bloom you expect in this repertoire. I'm surprised that she doesn't go for any of the Brentano settings of Op. 68, suitable for the lighter voice-type most perfectly allied here to the famous 'Serenade'.

That said, although there's not a great deal of tonal variety, the journey undertaken with clear, dependable if unsoaring pianist Götz Payer is surprisingly companionable. Special inflections inform the more probing pointing of the texts in 'Rote Rosen' and 'Die Georgine'. The secret raptures that need an inner glow work well, above all the two wood wanders, 'Freundliche Vision', 'Morgen!' and 'Traum durch die Dämmerung'. And if more voluptuousness is needed for 'Heimliche Aufforderung', 'Cäcilie' is convincingly paced, while the big final numbers, 'Ruhe, meine Seele!' and 'Befreit' also convince. It's a pity that though Wegener's and Payer's joint essay is translated into English, the Lieder texts are not. *David Nice*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Mirages

– The Art of French Song

Debussy: Beau Soir; **Caplet:** Cinq Ballades françaises; **Fauré:** Mirages, Op. 113; **Honegger:** Petit Cours de Morale; Saluste du Bartas; **Poulenc:** Deux poèmes de Guillaume Apollinaire; Parisiana; **Ravel:** Don Quichotte à Dulcinée; **Roderick Williams:** Les ténèbres de l'amour
Roderick Williams (baritone), Roger Vignoles (piano)
Champs Hill CHRCD159 73:06 mins

Roderick Williams's voice, with its smooth production and clear, unforced high notes, is well suited to the French *mélodie*, while his pronunciation is excellent. The Poulenc and Honegger songs are particularly successful, aided by Roger Vignoles's alert accompaniments, and it's good to hear Honegger in his more unbuttoned, tonal moods – I feel with other works there was often a little demon sitting on his shoulder muttering, 'For Heaven's sake, we're in the 20th century now, do get with it!' In Ravel's three Don Quichotte songs my only reservation is over Vignoles's generous pedalling in the third one: in the orchestral score, written under Ravel's supervision, the pizzicato bass notes strongly imply a mainly unpedalled texture.

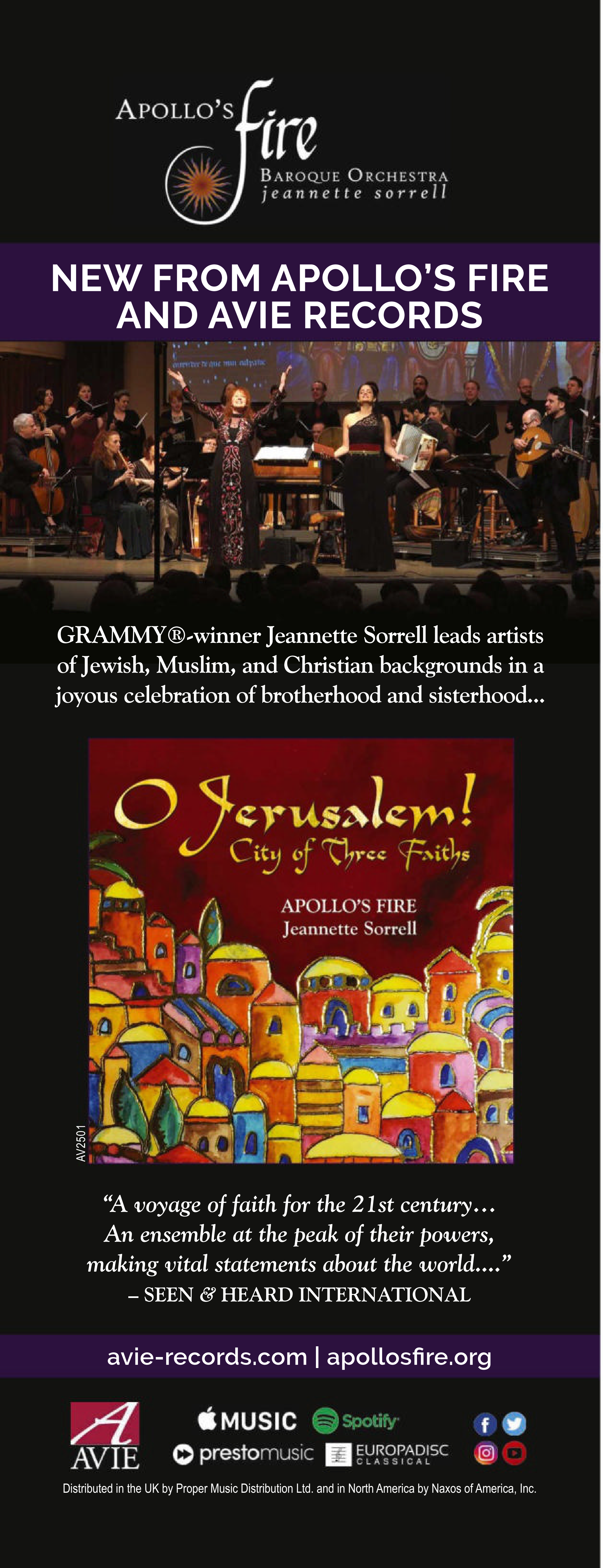
Fauré's *Mirages*, which open the recital, pose problems even for native French singers in their conjunct, almost parlando vocal lines at a uniform tempo – any interval larger than a fourth is a notable event. They really need a greater variety of articulation and vocal colour than Williams supplies to avoid becoming a featureless drift. As for his own Verlaine settings, largely atonal, they may possibly be thought not entirely congruent with the disc's subtitle, 'The Art of French Song'. I merely raise the question as to whether this necessarily implies songs by French composers? But I do also venture to quote Poulenc's sharp retort when Ned Rorem showed him his settings of Ronsard: 'Stick to Americans and leave the French to us.' *Roger Nichols*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

BACKGROUND TO…
Richard Strauss *Zueignung*

GETTY

It's said Strauss promised he would write his first published songs for an aunt, but he reneged on that, instead penning his Op. 10 collection for a tenor voice. Premiered by Rudolf Engelhardt in 1886, 'Zueignung' (Devotion) appeared in that first set of published songs and is based on the poem 'Habe Dank' (Have Thanks) by Hermann von Gilm. Strauss originally penned the song for voice and piano, but returned to it in 1940, arranging it for orchestra. That version was dedicated to, and premiered by, Viorica Ursuleac. She first sang it in Rome, under conductor Clemens Krauss (her husband).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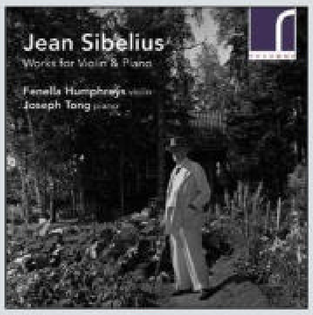
CHAMBER CHOICE



Highlights and discoveries in these Sibelius jewels

Violinist Fenella Humphreys and pianist Joseph Tong put on an impeccable show, says ***Malcolm Hayes***

Shining in Sibelius: Fenella Humphreys is a flawless player

Sibelius

Works for Violin and Piano: Pieces, Opp. 78, 81, 115 & 116; Danses champêtres, Op. 106; Andante cantabile
Fenella Humphreys (violin), Joseph Tong (piano)
Resonus RES 10294 67:32 mins

Sibelius's urbane streak, plus the need to supplement earnings in difficult times, had him producing numerous smaller works that he liked to call 'sandwiches', to sell mostly to local publishers in his native Finland. He was an accomplished violinist, good enough to have performed the Mendelssohn Concerto in his student years, and always a touch regretful that his early ambitions as a soloist hadn't worked out. Fenella Humphreys's selection of his violin and piano music includes one item, an *Andante cantabile* in G major, from the young composer's copious chamber-music output (his cello-playing brother and pianist sister were near-prodigies like himself). The quality material begins with the two sets of pieces Opp. 78 and 81 – written while Sibelius was effectively marooned in Finland during the First World War – and the *Danses champêtres* Op. 106. Highlights here include a finely sustained and quite extended 'Religioso' (Op. 78 No. 3).

But the remarkable discoveries are in the Opp. 115 and 116 groups dating from 1929. The level of imagination at work here – as in 'Die Glocken' (The Bells) Op. 115 No. 4, with its tolling piano figure and quicksilver violin figuration swirling around it – is as startling as in Sibelius's theatre music for *The Tempest*, written a few years earlier. From start to finish Humphreys's playing is a feast of flawless tuning, beautifully focused and coloured tone and rich characterisation. And there's no mistaking how Joseph Tong's accompanying, always immaculate in the earlier pieces, responds vividly to the stronger material in the later ones.

> Humphreys's playing is a feast of focus, colour and rich characterisation

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

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Bottesini

String Quintets Nos 1-3
I Musicanti; Leon Bosch (double bass)
Somm SOMMCD 0645 77:22 mins

Giovanni Bottesini (1821-89) pursued a three-fold career: first, as the leading double bass virtuoso of his day, then turning to opera conducting – including the world premiere of Verdi's *Aida* – while turning out an opera and concertos of his own plus, exceptionally for an Italian composer of his generation, a substantial body of chamber music, including four quintets, the first three of which comprise this disc. Only No. 1, the *Gran Quintetto*, supplements the string quartet line-up with a double bass; No. 2 reverts to the Boccherini model with extra cello, and No. 3, like Mozart, deploys an extra viola.

This little-known music reveals a highly accomplished composer, with well-formed melodies, inventive part-writing, nicely contrasted textures and an easeful command of long-term continuities. Its Romanticised neo-classicism recalls Mendelssohn, though in spirit and attainment is closest to Spohr. Occasionally one finds something neither of those composers might have written, such as the teasing waltz-scherzo of Quintet No. 3.

I Musicanti offers vivacious, colourful, flowing and finely nuanced accounts, with the noted double bassist Leon Bosch zooming and booming away in the depths of the *Gran Quintetto*. The recording is spacious and immediate, as though the players are arrayed right in front of one. *Bayan Northcott*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Brahms

Clarinet Sonata Nos 1 & 2; Violin Sonata No. 2 (arr. M Collins)
Michael Collins (clarinet), Stephen Hough (piano)
BIS BIS-2557 (CD/SACD) 63:22 mins

Michael Collins has already made a fine recording for Chandos of the Brahms Clarinet Sonatas with his regular duo partner Michael McHale (not to mention an earlier

one on Warner with Mikhail Pletnev), yet there is certainly room for this vividly engineered new release. With the eminent Brahms interpreter Stephen Hough, Collins brings special musical insights to these two late works. Notably, they triumphantly solve the interpretative conundrums posed by some of the composer's equivocal performing directions. A good case in point is the closing section of the opening *Allegro appassionato* of the F minor Sonata, during which the stormy outbursts that dominate the movement subside into a melancholy passage marked *Sostenuto ed espressivo*. Some interpreters slam on the brakes too readily at this point, whereas Collins and Hough wind down the tension gradually so that the final ghostly bars, anticipating the first of Brahms's *Four Serious Songs*, sound exceptionally poignant. Just as impressive is their treatment of the ensuing slow movement which maintains the composer's prescribed *Andante* tempo but contains a sufficiently subtle level of rubato to accommodate his qualification that it should be performed *un poco Adagio*.

There are innumerable delights elsewhere, not least Hough's capacity to make Brahms's thickly scored piano writing sound so playful in the thrilling finale to the F minor, and the autumnal glow of Collins's tone during the reflective passages in the outer movements of the E flat Sonata. An added bonus is Collins's transcription of the A major Violin Sonata which actually sounds just as idiomatic on the clarinet as in its original incarnation. *Erik Levi*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Kasputin • Ravel • Shostakovich

Shostakovich: Preludes, Op. 34 Nos 16 & 17; **Ravel:** Pavane pour une infante défunte; Violin Sonata in G; **Kapustin:** Violin Sonata, Op. 70

Roberts Balanas (violin), Siqian Li (piano)

Linn Records CKD 664 (digital only) 43:01 mins

Jazz is only one facet of a mercurial Ravel classic, but very much the driving force of Nikolai Kapustin's Violin Sonata of 1992. That ought to be the talking point of this digital release. Yet there are no notes beyond the context – that this is part of the Royal Academy of Music's Bicentenary Series on Linn, and a bit about the violinist, Roberts Balanas, now bidding for fame alongside his siblings, violinist Kristīne and cellist Margarita. Nor is there any information about the pianist, Siqian Li: a shame, as she's an equal partner in these intricate works. The chief pleasure is the intertwining of the musicianly lines in the Ravel, its outer movements fleet and glistening, the bitonalities scintillating. I've heard more in-your-face interpretations of the central 'Blues', but the naturalness has its own charm. Admittedly, the famous *Pavane* started life as a piano piece, but when I hear the violin in Louis Fleury's arrangement, I always long for the horn of the orchestral version; it's a decent enough encore.

The two Shostakovich/Tsyganov interludes give the ear a rest from complexity, though they're not without their subtle quirks. And what effortless dazzle there is in Kapustin's work, which sounds improvisational at times but is fully written out – the work of a composer who made his living in jazz but never thought of himself as exclusively jazz-oriented. It's not profound, but the dash of melancholy in the central movement and the sudden ferocity towards the end keep it from sounding facile. And it's given me an appetite to hear his 20 piano sonatas. *David Nice*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

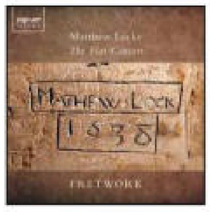
ALEJANDRO TAMAGNO, DAVID HINITT

Locke

The Flat Consort for my cousin Kemble, Suites Nos 1-5; Duos for Two Bass Viols Nos 2 & 4

David Miller (archlute/theorbo), Silas Wollston (harpsichord); Fretwork

Signum Classics SIGCD696 67:39 mins



Matthew Locke weathered the stormy years of 17th-century England, eventually becoming 'composer to his Majestye' Charles II and famous for his stage works and consorts whose 'skilful harmony' the young Purcell admired. This recording unveils five suites from Locke's 'Flat Consort' for a trio of viols and continuo, interspersed with a pair of duos for bass viols. The composer's mercurial idiom pervades in the moody Fantazias and terse dances of the consort: quirky melodic turns, lurching harmonies and kaleidoscopic moods show Locke was a master of theatrical effect. The duos epitomise the melancholy spirit of the age with their angular lines and dark hues.

It's interesting to compare this new disc by Fretwork with Phantasm's 2018 recording of two of the same 'Flat Consort' suites (Reviewed January 2019). Phantasm's accounts are rhetorical, highly articulated and expressive; the Linn recording is open and airy. Fretwork's approach is generally weightier and more introspective – a mood enhanced by Signum's closer recorded balance. Fretwork captures the brooding quality of the minor-mode suites particularly well, and their sinewy playing points up Locke's vigorous counterpoint and robust rhythms. The main bonus of the new disc, though, is its inclusion of three other suites from the surprisingly neglected 'Flat Consort'. *Kate Bolton-Porciatti*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Insightful Brahms: Stephen Hough and Michael Collins make a great team

Mozart

String Quartets, Vol. 4: No. 4 in C, K157; No. 6 in B flat, K159; No. 7 in E flat, K160; No. 19 in C, K465 'Dissonance'

Armida Quartett

CAvi-music AVI 8553205 62:33 mins

In this fourth instalment in the Armida Quartett's outstanding Mozart survey, I was initially struck by their stylistic and textural deftness in the three earlier works. The C major K157 is especially difficult to bring off convincingly, partly because of its associations with amateur ensembles making their initial foray into this area of the repertoire. In all honesty, the dancing finale is not one of the Austrian genius's finest moments, yet even here the Armida makes the music's over-insistent rhythmic syncopations sound inspired, allowing themselves barely perceptible injections of tempo in order to make the music go with a real swing.

In the B flat and E flat Quartets – not always the most comfortable of keys for string ensembles – the Armida's sparkling corporate intonation and textural litheness prove especially beguiling. They also judge immaculately the fine line that exists between over-inflating Mozart's early music and making it sound lightweight. This is partly a question of precision balancing between the various lines, so that it feels as though the music is virtually inventing itself as it goes along. Most exquisite of all is the Armida's microfine shadings, which imbue even the most workaday phrases with a sense of wonder.

Original and best: Jean-Pierre Rampal with his golden flute

From the archives

Andrew McGregor revisits the irresistably charismatic French flautist Jean-Pierre Rampal, as recorded by CBS

Without Jean-Pierre Rampal, born in Marseille in 1922, the modern flautist's world would be unimaginable. ***Jean-Pierre Rampal: The Complete CBS Masterworks Recordings*** (*Sony 19439888282; 56 CDs*) offers us insights into the artistry that made him such a hugely significant figure. There's a Mediterranean warmth, colour and passion to his playing, huge tonal variety and effortless virtuosity. 'He made music the way he breathed, with simplicity and joy,' says harpist Marielle Nordmann, and their recording of the Mozart Flute and Harp Concerto revels in that joy and generosity.

You'll need to look elsewhere for Rampal's earliest recordings; the CBS partnership took off with Mozart Flute Quartets in 1969, and his irresistible rapport with violinist Isaac Stern. Rampal had already redefined what a solo virtuoso flautist could be, and spent the next three decades broadening his appeal – the first *Man with the Golden Flute* (ahead of his sometime student James Galway) on an 1869 flute by Louis Lot, possibly the closest Rampal came to playing a period instrument. But he was a genuine Baroque pioneer, unearthing and recording a huge variety of repertoire, culminating in the Bach Sonatas for the fifth and final time with Trevor Pinnock in 1984, Telemann Concertos with the Franz Liszt Chamber Orchestra and the last CBS recording of Boccherini in 1996.

Rampal inspired contemporary composers, even when he wasn't always keen on the results (a Boulez piece he never played in public). The Poulenc Sonata was written for Rampal; CBS didn't record it, but the Penderecki Flute Concerto is here. There's Rampal the crossover pioneer in Claude Bolling's Jazz Suites; Rampal the classical celebrity in *Fascinatin' Rampal* (Gershwin arrangements), *In Concert live* with soprano Kathleen Battle, *A Night at the Opera* with Domingo and there's Rampal the conductor, including symphonies by his beloved Mozart.

BBC RADIO 3 90–93FM

Andrew McGregor is the presenter of Radio 3's *Record Review*, broadcast each Saturday morning from 9am until 11.45am

GETTY

Yet it is the Olympian musical resonances of the *Dissonance* Quartet K465 that set the seal on this deeply immersive set of performances. Here the Armida's linear democratising (a special word of praise for Teresa Schwamm's exquisitely judged viola playing) pays special dividends, as the ear is gently guided by the music's shifting sonorities. There was a time when listening to Mozart's quartets it was difficult to avoid a sense of Dresden china clinking gently in the background – not any longer! *Julian Haylock*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Purcell

Fantazias

Chelys Consort of Viols

BIS BIS-2583 (CD/SACD) 62:38 mins

Purcell's Fantasias and In Nomines for viol consorts of varying strengths are stellar representatives of a glorious legacy of music for these instruments. Dating from around 1680, the pieces reveal Purcell's gift for polyphony; subtle and elusive, they reflect the sophisticated development of an English tradition forged by earlier composers of the English Baroque, notably Gibbons and Locke.

Chelys Consort explores the music's expressive intimacy with a sensibility that touches our deepest thoughts and emotions. This may be felt in the warmly expressive four-part Fantasias in B flat, D minor, A minor and G major, whose textures are lucidly revealed. An effective feature of the programme is the inclusion of a Rondeau and Chaconne from *The Fairy Queen*, a Ground from *Dioclesian* and the celebrated Chacony in G minor to provide effective, lighter contrast.

Among noteworthy recordings of the Fantasias are those by Phantasm, London Baroque, Ricercar Ensemble, Fretwork, August Wenzinger and Nikolaus Harnoncourt, whose version is comfortably standing the test of time. This newcomer, with its exploration of the music's multi-layered stylistic and affective nuances, sits comfortably alongside them. Sometimes ardent, sometimes introspective, the playing affords immense pleasure. Ideal recorded sound comes with an interesting note by Chelys member, Ibrahim Aziz. *Nicholas Anderson*

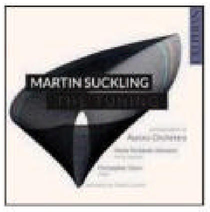
PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Martin Suckling

The Tuning; Nocturne; Emily's Electrical Absence String Quintet; Her Lullaby

Frances Leviston (reader); Marta Fontanals-Simmons (mezzo-soprano), Christopher Glynn (piano); principal players of Aurora Orchestra

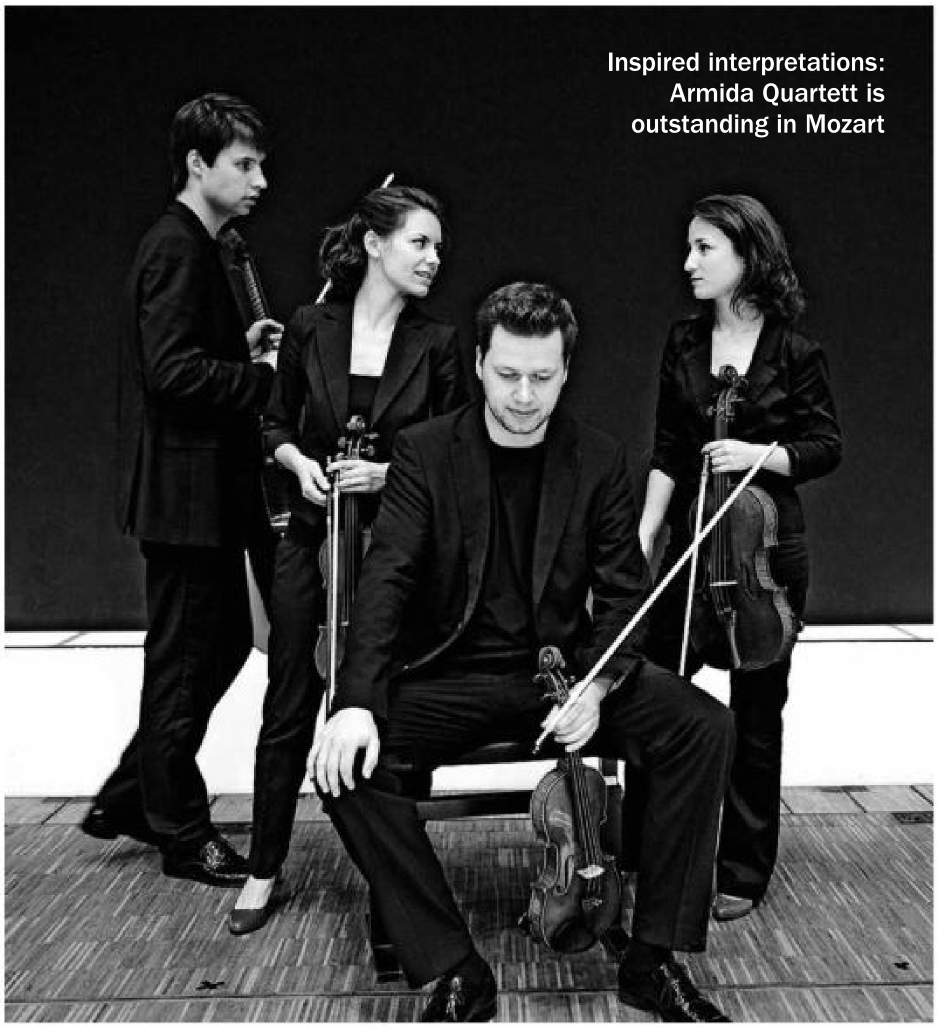
Delphian DCD 34235 75:39 mins



Following the NMC release of Suckling's orchestral music last year, this beautifully played and recorded disc shows his more intimate side. *The Tuning* sets five poems by Michael Donaghy, which share a vision of nature that is sometimes dark and unsettling. Marta Fontanals-Simmons reinforces the emotion in the words with her rich tone, eloquent legato, and impeccable intonation and diction. The piano, where Glynn is an equally impassioned advocate, is more turbulent, often using the extremes of the keyboard, obsessively turning round small melodic fragments.

For much of *Nocturne*, the two players – violin and cello – spin long lines inflected with microtones. This isn't as scary as it sounds, as there's a strong lyrical backbone and a basic sense of tonality. Things that go bump in the night come in alternating sections, where aggressive attacks and skittering harmonics gradually subside to the quieter conclusion. In *Her Lullaby*, the solo cello grips the attention for a full 16 minutes with the hypnotic melodic and rhythmic hook of its recurring, slightly unworldly theme.

The four movements of *Emily's Electrical Absence*, for the same line-up as Schubert's String Quintet, are bookended and interspersed by Frances Leviston reading her related poems. For me this breaks things up too much, but Suckling's music is again varied and impressive, with the opening movement setting off like a rocket, the upper strings chasing each other over more sustained cellos; then chords in harmonics alternating with silences in the second; greater lyricism in the third; and a slow dissolution in the long finale, with



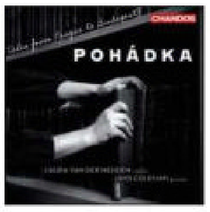
Inspired interpretations: Armida Quartett is outstanding in Mozart

tenuous harmonics again much in evidence. *Martin Cotton*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Pohádka
– *Tales from Prague to Budapest*

Janáček: Pohádka (Fairy Tale); Violin Sonata (arr. for cello); **Kodály:** Cello Sonata, Op. 4; Sonatina etc; **plus pieces by Dvořák, Kaprálová and Mihály**
Laura van der Heijden (cello), Jâms Coleman (piano)
Chandos CHAN 20227 76:06 mins

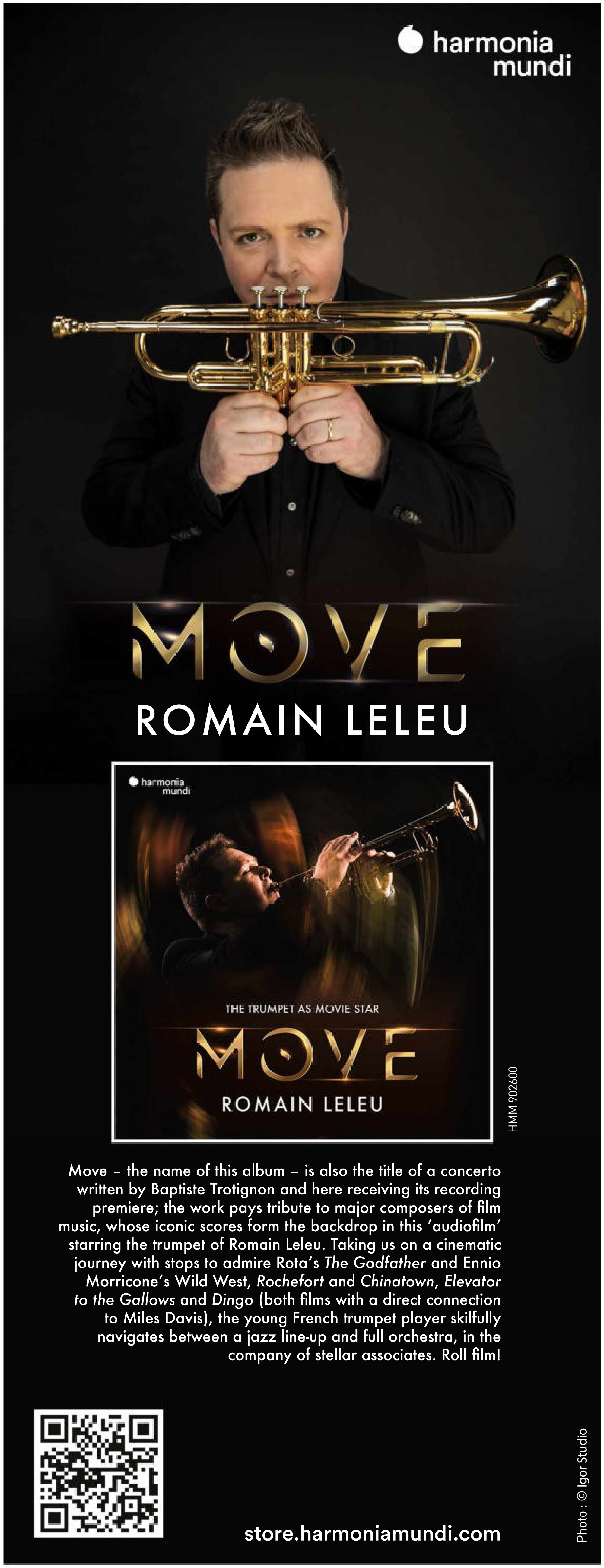


The starting point for this delicious and distinctive Bohemian programme was Janáček's *Pohádka* (1910): too often a makeweight, it's in fact an 11-minute opera, a musical nutriball of song, dance, poetry and drama. Laura van der Heijden and Jâms Coleman unleash its power in this big-boned reading, with its hair-trigger transitions from dreaming innocence to cataclysm. Janáček's Violin Sonata (1914) is yet more volatile and stark. In her arrangement, Van der Heijden has replaced the violin's thrilling screams (its connections to *Kát'a Kabanová* are strong) for the cello's warmer, though less idiomatic, embrace; but in the *Allegretto*'s scything scales and explosive motifs of the *Subito*, the instrument brings heft and higher-voltage ferocity. Coleman offers tumult and transparency.

If Janáček is the fire that lit the programme, Kodály's works for cello offer kinship and contrast. It's a treat to hear his too-rarely performed Sonata Op. 4 (1910), with its opening homage to Beethoven's Sonata No. 3 refracted through modal harmony. These performers bring sonorous depth and mystery to its long-limbed first movement, and spritely wit to its dancing finale. It's a fine example of the synthesis Kodály created between Hungarian rhythms and modes and the influence of Debussy, but Beethoven is a strong presence in the instrumental interplay. Here, too, is the strange Sonatina (1909), which feels like an improvisatory premonition of the Sonata.

Amidst the song arrangements, Kodály's shimmering, epigrammatic 'Slender is the silk thread' stands out, and Vitěszla Kaprálová's 'Navždy' which breathes the mystical air of Messiaen with the voluptuousness of Franck: what a loss she was to European music. *Helen Wallace*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★



Instrumental

INSTRUMENTAL CHOICE

Kavakos's Bach is unshowy but alluring

Julian Haylock **appreciates the violinist's natural approach to these solo works**

JS Bach

Sonatas & Partitas for Solo Violin
Leonidas Kavakos (violin)
Sony 19439903132 137:56 mins (2 discs)

Although no mention is made of it in the booklet, the first surprise awaiting the listener is that Leonidas Kavakos plays at something like 'authentic' pitch (roughly a semitone lower than modern norms). Those with pitch sensitivity can hardly miss it, as Kavakos elects to open with (traditionally) the most tonally brilliant work in the set, the E major Partita, which therefore emerges less ear-ringingly direct than usual. It also sounds as though Kavakos is using gut, as opposed to metal or steel-wound strings, resulting in a more mellow, slightly grainier soundworld. Additionally, he positively relishes the natural sound of open strings, exchanging the timbre-beautifying obsessions of post-Romantic fingerings, with all their ingenious finger replacements and myriad position changes, for the more bracing allure of allowing the violin's natural resonances to sing out unimpeded.

Furthermore, Kavakos's stylistic sensitivities bring an element of decorative fantasy to the naked urtext, as would have occurred in the hands of any skilled player of the period. He uses vibrato very sparingly and with exquisite subtlety as a microcosmic timbral shading, and employs the bow (most noticeably in the notorious string-crossings of the C major Sonata's Fugue) with a deftness and lightness of touch more suggestive of a Baroque original. He also exchanges the cantabile smoothness and resonance typical of mid-20th-century playing for a dazzling range of articulation, which makes the various dance movements really zing. Kavakos concludes with the mighty D minor Chaconne, which emerges all the more poignantly for not having its innate greatness imposed on it with lashings of furrowed-brow rhetoric.

Kavakos allows the violin's resonances to sing out unimpeded

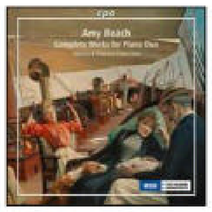
PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Deftly done: Leonidas Kavakos's light touch pays off

You can access thousands of reviews from our extensive archive on the BBC Music Magazine website at **www.classical-music.com**

Beach

Variations on Balkan Themes; Three Pieces (for piano four-hands); Suite Founded Upon Old Irish Melodies; Summer Dreams
Genova & Dimitrov Piano Duo
CPO 555 453-2 63:51 mins



Playing from newly published editions, Aglika Genova and Liuben Dimitrov have done both Amy Beach and the piano duo repertoire an excellent service here. From the splendidly Brahmsy *Variations on Balkan Themes* to the audibly 20th-century tapestries in the *Suite Founded Upon Old Irish Melodies*, these are works that should be welcomed with open arms by duo-pianists and audiences alike.

A pianist and composer from childhood, who won through without formal conservatoire training, Beach (born Amy Cheney) was one of the most important American composers of her day and enormously respected in her lifetime. Her first works for piano duo, the *Three Pieces*, simple but atmospheric and deftly written, were composed when she was just 16. *Summer Dreams* (1901) is a series of short tone-poems, each bearing a line or several of poetry by way of inspiration from Shakespeare, Whitman and more. Folksong was a preoccupation for Beach as for many of her peers in early 20th-century music, and Bulgarian folk music, which a missionary friend who had worked there played to her, inspired the substantial Variations Op. 60. Finally the Suite Op. 104, was written before World War I, but published in 1924 and enjoyed notable public success thereafter.

Genova and Dimitrov, who have devoted themselves to their duo since their student days, perform this technically demanding and richly imagined music with enormous affection and flair, conjuring its atmospheres and textures seamlessly, as if with one mind. A must-hear album for all who want to explore Beach's highly rewarding output. *Jessica Duchen*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Beethoven

Piano Sonatas: No. 29 in B flat, Op. 106 'Hammerklavier'; No. 32 in C minor, Op. 111
Angela Hewitt (piano)
Hyperion CDA68374 77:21 mins

And so with this volume, Angela Hewitt concludes her Beethoven Piano Sonata cycle. It makes sense that the Canadian pianist has saved Op. 106 and Op. 111 to last. The mighty *Hammerklavier*

Sonata in B flat is a physical, mental and emotional challenge like few other pieces of music, while the C minor was Beethoven's 32nd and final piano sonata, his last word on the genre.

Hewitt reaches this milestone in the company of a new Fazioli piano, replaced after a disastrous accident destroyed the instrument she had used for all her recordings since 2003. Yet the hallmarks of Hewitt's artistry are in evidence: finger-work of nimble grace and steely strength; clarity of line; understated pedalling. These are considered readings that bring out the detail of Beethoven's writing, captured in clear sound by Hyperion.

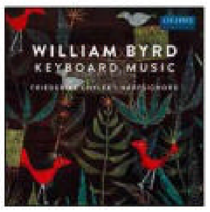
In the *Hammerklavier*, the *Adagio sostenuto, appassionato e con molto sentimento* is beautifully judged. If Hewitt doesn't quite touch the sublime here, that's because her opening *Allegro* also misses the sense of gargantuan struggle written into the music. The contrast is lost. And the almost clipped feel to her playing in the finale ultimately undermines the emotional power of the sonata.

The C minor Sonata makes a fitting conclusion, however, to an odyssey that has spanned the past 15 years. Hewitt's excellence as a Bach pianist pays dividends in the Baroque grandeur of the first movement and the easy lilt and rhythmic games of the variations. And she gets to the heart of the sonata's existential journey, carrying us from the spiritual depths towards starlight. *Rebecca Franks*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Byrd

Keyboard Music: Sellinger's Round; The Seconde Grownde in C; Prelude in A minor; The Carman's Whistle etc
Friederike Chylek (harpsichord)
Oehms OC 1724 57:02 mins



In her carefully researched programme, the German harpsichordist, Friederike Chylek has selected 13 pieces of varying form and character by William Byrd. The first part of the 17th century was a glorious period for English keyboard music. The best-known sources are the *Fitzwilliam Virginal Book*, compiled roughly between 1609 and 1619, and a volume entitled *Parthenia or the Maydenhead of the first musicke that was ever printed for the Virginalls*. Both anthologies contain pieces by Byrd from which, albeit indirectly, many included here are taken.

The late Thurston Dart aptly remarked that virginals music could be played on any instrument that happened to be handy, though of course, he added, some pieces are better suited to one instrument than to another. Chylek has opted for a harpsichord throughout, a copy by Matthias Griewisch of a 1624 Ruckers. It sounds well, and Chylek's apposite phrasing and articulation – Byrd's particularity in the execution of his keyboard music foreshadowing that of François Couperin – further adds to our enjoyment. However, it is perhaps a pity that she has assigned her entire programme to a single instrument, and I sometimes found myself longing for the simpler stylised dances to be played on a virginals.

The pieces which best highlight the considerable attractions of her chosen instrument are the more substantial ones such as the brilliant Fantasia (*Musica Britannica*, Vol. 27, No. 3), the 'Second Ground' (MB, Vol. 27, No. 42) and 'Hugh Aston's/Tregian's Ground', the latter name to some extent, perhaps, reflecting the Italianate taste of the compiler of the *Fitzwilliam Virginal Book*. *Nicholas Anderson*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★

Ludovico Einaudi

Underwater; Luminous; Wind Song; Natural Light; Rolling Like a Ball; Indian Yellow etc
Ludovico Einaudi (piano)
Decca 387 5461 46:05 mins

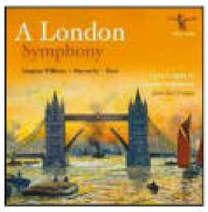
It's hard to believe that it has been 20 years since this seemingly ubiquitous composer-pianist last released a solo piano album. That was 2001's *I Giorni* and it was my first exposure to the world of Ludovico Einaudi, thanks to my dad who gave me a copy – an Italian house guest of his at the time kept playing it and he thought I'd enjoy it. I did. Since then Einaudi's star has only risen higher and burned brighter, with millions streaming his music around the world, and he has proven himself more than just an ivory tinkler. Indeed, his last few albums have showcased him as something of a sonic visionary, creating thrilling aural tapestries in collaborative projects of varying scales.

As was the case for so many musicians, the pandemic forced Einaudi to necessarily retreat and create alone. *Underwater* is the result of that time spent at the piano, making music without the interference of the outside world. As such, there's a purity and warmth to this collection of pieces, perhaps even beyond that of his early keyboard works – helped by what is a super-close recording. It's a familiar soundworld, of course, and for some it might seem like nothing more than background music. Sure, it's unintrusive and its seeming meanderings might appear simplistic. But for me that's the beauty of it: there is an innocence to this music, and that's reflected in titles like 'Indian Yellow' and 'Rolling Like a Ball'. It all feels as if you're party to an intimate exchange – the composer in private communion with the piano, somewhere between confessional and daydream. *Michael Beek*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Finzi • Maconchy • Vaughan Williams

Vaughan Williams: A London Symphony (arr. A Jacob); **Maconchy:** Preludio, Fugato e Finale; **Finzi:** Eclogue (arr. Ferguson/Charles Matthews)
Lynn Arnold (piano), Charles Matthews (piano, organ)
Albion ALBCD046 64:18 mins



Following their previous release dominated by a piano duet version of Walton's Symphony No. 1, Lynn Arnold and Charles Matthews offer the abstract-impressionist 'London' symphony that Vaughan Williams seemed loth to relinquish, pushing it through two revisions, shortening it each time, before letting the work come to rest in 1936. What we have here is its first revision of 1920, as transcribed for keyboards by Archibald Jacob (a brother of that master orchestrator and arranger, Gordon Jacob). Listening to the slower sections, you may pine for the original instrumentation, teasingly indicated in the arrangement's score as particular bars pass by. On the other hand, it's hard to resist the ferocious drama these sympathetic pianists generate elsewhere, as in the scherzo, with its clattering panache. At best, Jacob's version resembles a skilful etching of a familiar oil painting: not its equal, but still valuable for casting new light on the work's forms and rhythms.

Music by Vaughan Williams's friends and pupils fill out the disc. Maconchy's tonality-bending 1967 creation is eloquently angular, with a fugato section so spikily attractive that I wish it wasn't so concise. The one disappointment is the version of Finzi's *Eclogue*, remnant of an aborted piano concerto. There's nothing wrong with the artists' skills or the music, so comforting in its stately pastoral tread; but Matthews's arrangement for piano and organ, mediated through Howard Ferguson's two-piano transcription and a muddy acoustic,

BACKGROUND TO…
Amy Beach's *Summer Dreams*

This set of six colourful miniatures were the only piano duets to be published during Amy Beach's lifetime, in 1901. *Summer Dreams* features whimsical titles such as 'Robin Redbreast' and 'Brownies' (a kind of elf or pixie) and were originally envisaged by the composer for home music-making. She chose poetic extracts to be printed as an introduction to each piece, serving as something of a mood-setter for the player. The work features a revised piece from her 1883 Three Pieces for Piano Four-Hands, the original version of which went unpublished until 1998.

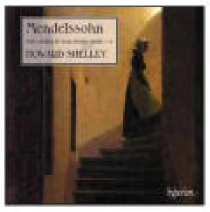
MARCO BORGGREVE, GETTY

forcibly reminds us that pianos and organs mix together as smoothly as oil and water. *Geoff Brown*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★

Mendelssohn

Solo Piano Music, Vol. 6: Songs without Words, Books 7 & 8; Piano Sonata in B flat, Op. 106; Capriccio in E, Op. 118; Prelude and Fugue in E minor, WoO13; Musical sketches, WoO19 etc.
Howard Shelley (piano)
Hyperion CDA68368 73:57 mins



This is the final instalment of Howard Shelley's well-received survey of the almost 200 solo piano pieces Mendelssohn somehow managed to scribble in his incredibly busy career – a number of which only reached publication after his death. These included the B flat Piano Sonata, composed at 18, exuberantly mixing influences of Beethoven and Weber with glimpses of the more *gemütliche* Mendelssohn to come, but missing the genius of his greatest teenage scores.

The last two collections of *Songs without Words* were also assembled posthumously, partly from pieces he had earmarked, partly by editorial choice, but show no falling off in variety and charm of the often underrated previous six books. The disc is rounded out with a variety of fugitive pieces, among which the Capriccio in E major, Op. 118, comprises a serenely swinging introduction into which a wide-ranging, often stormy minor key *Allegro* suddenly erupts.

Recorded in a full, close acoustic – almost as though one were standing next to the piano in some Victorian drawing-room – the solidity of Shelley's pianism and his belief in this music comes over convincingly. Except, to these ears, for one recurrent mannerism: a tendency, particularly in some of the *Songs without Words*, to insert tiny rubato spurts or slowings, which may heighten local expression but work against that longer-term sense of gliding ease that is so special to Mendelssohn's musical character. For these pieces, the Dutch pianist Frank van der Laar on Brilliant Classics remains a favourite. *Bayan Northcott*

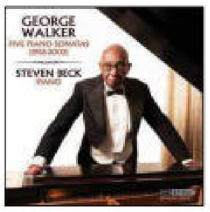
PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

What's in a name?: Simon Johnson goes on a remarkable Bach journey

MALCOLM CROWTHERS

G Walker

Piano Sonatas Nos 1-5
Steven Beck (piano)
Bridge BRIDGE 9554 53:13 mins



When George Walker died in 2018 at the age of 96, his obituaries made plain the trailblazing nature of his long career. His life was packed with firsts. To name a few, he was the first African-American pianist to give a recital at New York's Town Hall; the first black graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music; the first black composer to win the Pulitzer Prize for Music. His 100-or-so works include five remarkable piano sonatas, which make an important contribution to the 20th-century keyboard repertoire.

Steven Beck's performances do them proud, bringing together all five pieces in one recording for the first time. Spanning much of the composer's creative life, from 1953 to 2003, the sonatas offer a superb introduction to Walker's music. It's possible to point to this or that influence – European modernism, serialism, folk songs – yet these ingredients are always forged into something new. A formidable pianist himself, Walker was a musician who valued technique and tradition: his distinctive musical voice has real integrity that repays deep listening.

His first major piano work was the Sonata No. 1, an angular and tender piece that is as bracingly uncompromising as anything by Stravinsky. Lucid and lean, the Sonata No. 2 explores the intervallic relationship of the third. Atonality hangs in the air of Sonata No. 3, a Webern-like clarity of thought. The striking second movement, 'Bell', consists of a single chord repeated 17 times. The Fourth is condensed and astringent, yet Walker goes a step further with the Fifth. The journey ends with a single movement: concise, strong and utterly individual. *Rebecca Franks*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

B-A-C-H

Anatomy of a Motif

JS Bach: Art of the Fugue in D minor, BWV 1080 – Contrapunctus XIV a4 (completed L Rogg); Ricercar à 6; **Brahms:** Fugue, WoO 8; **Karg-Elert:** Passacaglia and Fugue on B.A.C.H, Op. 150; **Liszt:** Präludium und Fuge über den Namen B.A.C.H, S260; **Mendelssohn/Lutz:** Sonata on the Choral 'O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden'; **Reger:** Fantasie und Fuge über B.A.C.H, Op.46; **Schumann:** Sechs Fugen über den Namen 'Bach'
Simon Johnson (organ)
Chandos CHSA 5285(2) (CD/SACD) 135:06 mins (2 discs)

As Simon Johnson admits, presenting two hours of music based on just four notes doesn't sound a tantalising prospect, but this double album is full of revelations. He acknowledges the part Covid has played in the project, giving him time to practise these seldom-performed – and sometimes daunting – works. His strategy, taking *Die Kunst der Fuge* with Lionel Rogg's new ending as a starting point, has been to follow the B-A-C-H trail from the 19th-century Bach revival to some very different homages in the 20th.

Felix Mendelssohn's legendary improvisation on 'Oh sacred head' was inflated by Rudolf Lutz into a charming three-movement sonata, and Johnson follows this with Schumann's edgier and very interesting tribute, *Sechs Fugen über den Namen 'Bach'*. Then comes Brahms's response to Schumann's work, Fugue in A flat minor, which reflected the reverence in which both Brahms and Clara Schumann (to whom Brahms sent a copy) held Bach. As David Gammie observes in his excellent liner note, Brahms told his friend, the violinist Joseph Joachim, that its morbid atmosphere frightened him, to which Joachim replied that to him the music spoke of 'unity and beauty and blessed peace', which seems to me more accurate.

Enter then Franz Liszt, with his *Präludium und Fuge über den Namen B-A-C-H*, an extraordinary work which John Ogdon described as 'a Mahlerian ride to the abyss'; its spooky emergence from infernal regions leads to fireworks which draw on all the resources of the organ. Johnson's brilliant playing does this work full justice, but both the acoustic and the instrument on which we hear these pieces – the 17th-century organ of St Paul's Cathedral – can be problematic. The cathedral's billowing, soupy echoes do no favours to the austere, angular perfection of the pieces by Bach himself.

Johnson rounds off his pilgrimage with two curiosities. Max Reger's *Fantasie und Fuge über B-A-C-H* goes to every conceivable extreme; as the composer himself said, 'to the outer limits of the harmonically and technically possible'. And Sigfrid Karg-Elert's *Passacaglia and Fugue on B-A-C-H* takes the argument into a new soundworld, with cinematic effects. Altogether, this is a remarkable survey, brilliantly executed. *Michael Church*

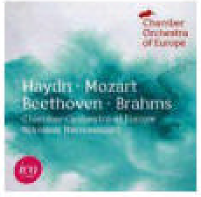
PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★

Historical

Daniel Jaffé dusts off archive recordings by master conductors and great soloists

March round-up

The landmark recording of Beethoven's complete symphonies by ***Nikolaus Harnoncourt and the Chamber Orchestra of Europe*** was the first by a modern orchestra to follow 'authentic' performance



practices. Here, on CD for the first time, are several of their live recordings, including polished and light-footed accounts of ***Beethoven***'s Fifth and Seventh. The real draw of this 4-CD set, though, are the ***Haydn*** and ***Mozart*** discs. Mozart's Symphony No. 29 is full of charm and, in the finale, dazzling virtuosity, qualities matched by the equally excellent *Posthorn* Serenade. Their Haydn also has bags of character and affection – and, in the *Military* Symphony, ferocious menace. Their ***Brahms*** Four is well-detailed in terms of instrumental colour, but is rather short of the passion found by such great conductors as Klemperer. *(ICA Classics ICAC 5161 ★★★★)*

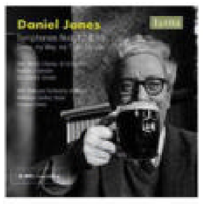
Another live recording, ***Karl Richter*** conducting Haydn's ***Creation*** (in 1972) enjoys an excellent line-up of soloists – soprano Elisabeth Speiser, tenor Werner Hollweg and bass Karl Christian Kohn – and very fine if, by today's standards, rather

plush orchestral playing. The performance is in German – no texts are included. Rather more disappointingly, the sound balancing is ad hoc, with sudden orchestral *fortes* catching the engineers by surprise, who then dial down at the expense of subsequent solos. *(Hänssler HC 20076 ★★★)*

Worse though more consistent broadcast sound is accorded ***Beecham*** conducting ***Sibelius's First Symphony*** in Edinburgh 1952, evidently taped off-air with less than the highest end equipment. Yet what comes through is a blazing performance – further evidence that Beecham was evidently far more inspired live than is reflected in his sometimes more wayward studio recordings. In this elemental and in places touchingly tender account, both orchestra and

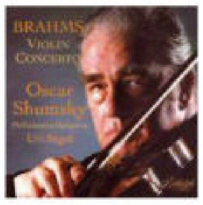
conductor are at the top of their game. For filler we have charmingly perky accounts of *Scènes historiques II*, though in an even worse off-air recording from 1947 in which the second piece has its final bars chopped off. Finally, two former players of the Royal Philharmonic reminisce about Beecham. *(SOMM Ariadne 5013 ★★★★)*

When Welsh composer ***Daniel Jones*** (1912-93) composed his ***Symphonies Nos 12 and 13*** (1985 and 1992), he had already established a style pithier than the Brahmsian flow of his First Symphony, yet still clearly indebted to Vaughan Williams. Both works make their points concisely yet



evocatively, as conducted by Bryden Thomson and Tecwyn Evans. His cantata on texts by George Herbert, though, seems a shadow of more deftly composed works by Walton and Honegger. *(Lyrita SRCD 391 ★★★★)*

Of Russian-Jewish heritage, the violinist ***Oscar Shumsky*** (1917-2000) largely avoided self-promotion and preferred to focus on teaching at the Curtis Institute and Juilliard. In this recording of ***Brahms's Violin Concerto***, professionally engineered but left unedited until after his death, his patrician style is evident in the



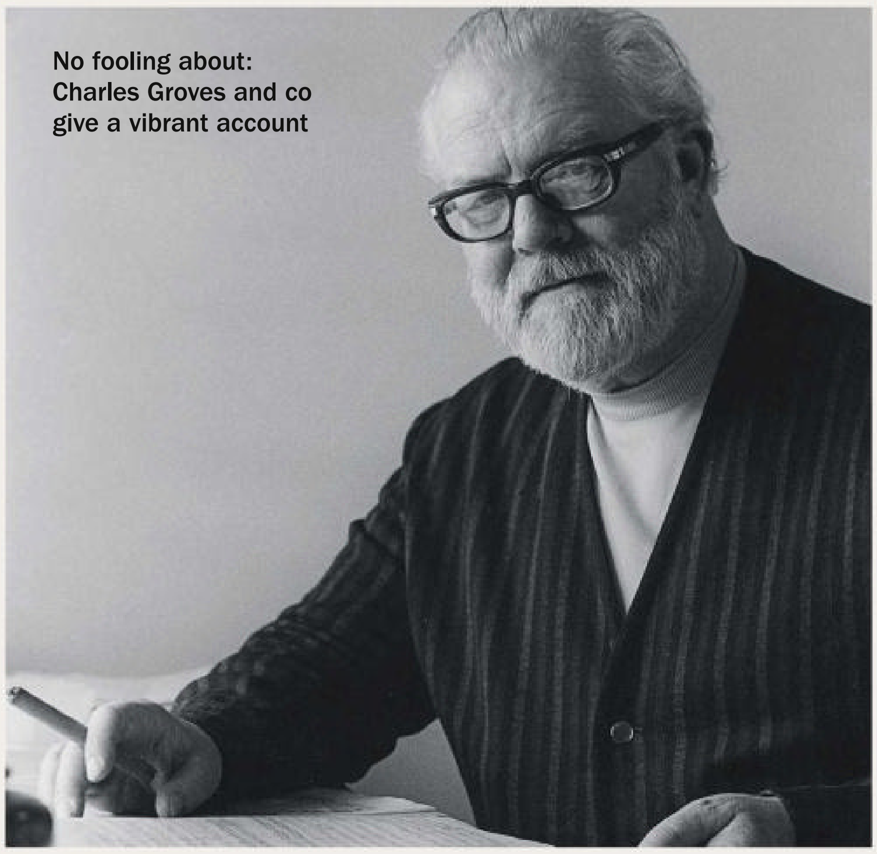
extensive opening movement, but with very little emotional engagement or even care over such details as precise tuning. But in the slow movement, Shumsky suddenly wakes up and gives a heart-warming and technically immaculate account. This, and his playful finale, makes for a highly enjoyable listen. *(Biddulph 85007-2 ★★★)*

GETTY

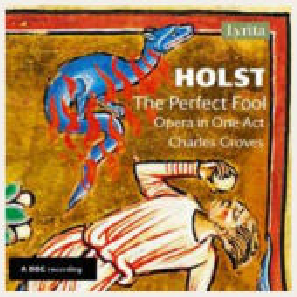
HISTORICAL CHOICE

Spellbinding Holst

There's much to enjoy in this first release of a 1967 BBC broadcast of *The Perfect Fool*



No fooling about: Charles Groves and co give a vibrant account



Holst

The Perfect Fool

Richard Golding, Pamela Bowden et al; BBC Northern Singers; BBC Northern Symphony Orchestra/Charles Groves

Lyrita REAM 1143 62:24 mins

Though much admired at its 1923 premiere – not least by the managing director of Rolls-Royce who subsequently gave Holst the princely sum of £1,500 (today worth £80K) so he could devote himself to composition – it is only now, almost a century later, that *The Perfect Fool* receives its first commercial release. Very much a radio adaptation, this 1967 BBC broadcast includes a personable narrator explaining the stage action. Allowing for this and the mono sound, this is a highly engaging production with a superb cast – with rich-toned bass-baritone Richard Golding especially compelling as the comically malevolent Wizard. The excellent and more complete Vernon Handley 1995 broadcast can be streamed online; but having listened several times to this earlier account by Charles Groves, my only real gripe is the cutting of the bucolic orchestral cue that accompanies the shepherd's description of a land at peace before the conflagration conjured by the vengeful Wizard (particularly resonant to an audience that had endured the First World War). Otherwise, this is a vibrant account, vividly characterised, with truly spellbinding music. ★★★★

World

Michael Church selects recordings from the past and instruments to discover

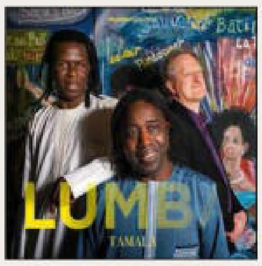
WORLD CHOICE

A 'Big day' to celebrate

Senegal meets Belgium in this cheerful album of traditional life lessons and infectious tunes

Crossing borders: Wouter Vandenabeele, Bao Sissoko and Mola Sylla

DIETER TELEMANS



Lumba

Tamala

Muziekpublique 14 68:37 mins

Ethnographic recordings were once a thriving sector of the CD market. But they didn't chime happily with the world-music boom, which required Third World musicians to adjust their style to European and American tastes. Based in Brussels, Muziekpublique is an organisation dedicated to promoting music from every part of the world, and in particular the music found in its own multicultural back yard. Some of its recordings are made by immigrants from across the Mediterranean – that's how new fusions are emerging – but *Lumba* (Mande for 'big day') reflects African talent already happily settled in Europe. Singer-songwriter Mola Sylla and kora-player Bao Sissoko hail from Senegal, with Belgian violinist Wouter Vandenabeele completing a trio which enriches its effects with guest artists from several other countries. There's a cheerful sweetness pervading every track, with violin and kora supporting its vocal messages which – following Senegalese tradition – teach how to live a good life. Avoid religious bigotry, fight corruption, respect nature, be kind to the poor… ★★★★★

March round-up

The French label Ocora was conceived as a post-imperial exercise in musical stock-taking. But the archive it has built up over the last 60 years is now uniquely precious, and ***Tembang Sunda***, recorded in the '70s, brings back rural music which even then was dying out. *Tembang Sunda* simply means 'singing in the Sunda style', and its roots lie in the ancient Hindu kingdom of that name. With vocal additions, the *suling* bamboo flute and the *kacapi indung* zither are the principal instruments, and a typical performance would start at dusk and continue through until dawn. These recordings are the most beautiful I've ever heard from Java, with gracefully structured pieces decorated with ravishing virtuosity. *(Ocora C 583064 ★★★★★)*

No less special is ***The Art of the Ud***, another archival release from Ocora which was recorded in 1983. ***Cinuçen Tanrikorur*** was unique in that he was entirely self-taught, yet his playing embodied to perfection the labyrinthine rules and conventions of Turkish *maqam*. One of the strengths of this CD is that its liner notes reveal the structure of each piece; with an improvisation,

they detail all the component stages as mode succeeds mode, modulation to modulation. As the texts indicate, even the secular pieces give a sense of the sacred. One of those texts is an elegy for a celebrated flautist who died as he was giving the note to other musicians for a concert: 'The souls of all flautists descend in ranks from the skies, to bear witness to a master before God.' Tanrikorur's voice becomes passionate at this point, but it sometimes sounds as if he is just murmuring ecstatically to himself. The melodic lines convey their own harmonies the way Bach's cello suites do; indeed, the intricacy and subtlety of the invention constantly puts one in mind of him. *(Ocora C583045 ★★★★★)*

Tanrikorur gave us a rare overview of the potential scope of the ud, and in ***The Art of the Pipa***, ***Wang Weiping*** strives to do the same for the resonant Chinese lute. Recorded in 1997, her repertoire here includes two of her own compositions, but she humbly follows in China's ancient tradition, both musically and thematically. In the cloistered world of classical pipa, players still seek to evoke

aristocratic and imperial scenes, as well as the obligatory moonlit nights and the flights of wild geese; it's poignant to note that one of her tracks celebrates Uyghur culture. She sings with delicately-nuanced refinement, but her martial numbers – notably the classic 'The king takes off his armour' – don't have the fire which Wu Man, who brought the pipa to the West, brings to them. *(Ocora C561128 ★★★★)*

Keyvan, Bijan and ***Maryam Chemirani*** have long drawn on their dual Iranian-French background to create unexpected fusions, and ***Hâl – Ballades Amoureuses*** is the siblings' most beguiling yet. The Persian word *hâl* indicates intoxicated self-abnegation, but Keyvan modestly regards this recording as 'simply a lighthouse' on the path to enlightenment. They have poured into it all the musical wisdom they've acquired over three decades

of listening and multi-instrumental experimentation, and the results have great charm. Some songs explore Celtic folklore, and several are vocal settings of medieval Persian poetry, with Maryam's mellow timbre bringing the lyrics engagingly to life. And the instrumental numbers are fascinating. Different kinds of goblet drum predominate, but we also get lovely accompaniment on uilleann pipes from master flautist Sylvain Barou and several contributions by the Greek lyra virtuoso Sokratis Sinopoulos. *(Alpha 754 ★★★★★)*

NEW RELEASES FROM FINLAND

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Complete piano works by Armas Järnefelt played by young Finnish pianist.

Janne Oksanen, piano

NCD 60
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Laulu-Miehet *male voice choir*
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Tuomas Katajala, *tenor*
Matti Turunen, *bass*

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Brief notes

Our selection this month sees beginnings, piano reflections and falling leaves

Maxence Cyrin
Melancholy Island
Maxence Cyrin (piano)
Warner Classics 9029646252

This is my first time hearing Cyrin, whose piano covers of pop tracks have become a favourite of soundtrack curators in recent years. This collection of mostly original piano works is introspective, occasionally derivative and sometimes rather beautiful. (MB) ★★★

Philip Glass
A Common Time etc
Chase Spruill (violin)
Orange Mountain OMM0158

This is the second full album Chase Spruill has dedicated to Philip Glass, including a premiere. It's all performed on solo violin – which makes for a highly exposed acoustic, calling for a cleaner edit. (FP) ★★

Peñaolsa • Victoria
Marian Music from Spain – Choral Works
Peñalosa Ensemble
CPO 555 398-2

Though one-to-a-part performances of these Spanish Renaissance works bring both clarity and personality, they also highlight occasional moments of vocal unsteadiness and untidy entries. The music itself is simply glorious. (JP) ★★★

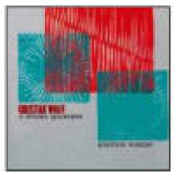
Petridis
Requiem for the Emperor Constantine Palaiologos etc
Various Artists
Naxos 8.574354-55

Petridis's chant-inspired style in the Requiem is, for all its intense drama, also fairly arduous listening. The Greek composer shows a touch more refinement in his *Parisian* Third Symphony, but it's not an instantly engaging performance. (JP) ★★

Reinecke
Complete Piano Trios
Hyperion Trio
CPO 555 476-2

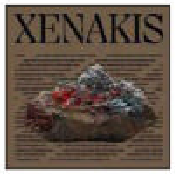
There's a good case to be made for the chamber music of Carl Reinecke, which the Hyperion Trio make here. Over two discs, they share his serenades and trios, with an apt pairing of Reinecke's trio arrangement of Beethoven's Triple Concerto. (FP) ★★★

Christian Wolff
Three String Quartets
Quatuor Bozzini
New World NW80830



There's something wonderfully spiky and unwieldy about Wolff's music, as this selection of works colourfully shows. Composed as far apart as 1974 and 2019, these pieces keep both players and listeners on their toes. If a string quartet was out of sorts, this is how it might sound. (MB) ★★★

Xenakis
Pléiades & Persephassa
Les Percussions de Strasbourg
Percussions de Strasbourg PDS121



To celebrate Xenakis's centenary, Les Percussions de Strasbourg bring us a selection of works by the avant-garde composer – including two they commissioned themselves in the 1960s and '70s. It's punchy stuff. (FP) ★★★★

840
Works by Satie, Poulenc, Cage, Andriessen et al (arr. guitar)
Enno Voorhorst (guitar)
Cobra COBRA 0084

Satie is the thread that runs through this generous recital of works arranged for solo guitar. Voorhorst's tone is pleasant and warm, while the close-recorded sound makes for an intimate listen. The penultimate entry is Cage's *4'33"*, so remember to stick around for Satie's final *Allegro*. (MB) ★★★★

As the Leaves Fall
Choral Works by Darke and Duruflé
Guildford Cathedral Choir; Chameleon Arts Orchestra et al
Regent REGCD563

Besides his setting of 'In the Bleak Midwinter', Harold Darke is little known beyond Anglican church music circles, an injustice highlighted here. The soundworld is lush, with catchy hooks, paired perfectly with the Requiem by Darke's contemporary Duruflé. (FP) ★★★★

Auftakt **Works by Beethoven, Brahms and Gál**
Trio Vision
ORF CD 3248

There is much to enjoy from this debut recording by Trio Vision, taken from a live broadcast at the first 'Beethoven Spring Festival' in Austria in 2020. The performances of these first trios by the composers are poised and polished; you might say they have a typically Viennese glow. (MB) ★★★★

Awakening **Works by Scriabin, Suk, Schubert and Mendelssohn**
Trio Aries
Et'Cetera KTC1746

All four works in this nicely chosen programme combine passion with bundles of charm, excellently expressed by this fine young trio – the Suk is a real joy. Occasionally, though, the recorded balance leaves a little to be desired. (JP) ★★★

Beginnings **Works by Beethoven, Bernstein and Rachmaninov**
The Silver Trio
Coviello COV92110

Hats off for an enterprising programme that features very early pieces by three very differing composers. Lovers of Bernstein will enjoy spotting moments that reappear in his later, more familiar works. (JP) ★★★★

The Bird of Life
Late Romantic Flute Treasures
Birgit Ramsl-Gaal, Karl-Heinz Schütz (flutes), Gottlieb Wallisch (piano)
Naxos 8.579111

What a surprising delight this recording is. Not only is flautist Birgit Ramsl-Gaal's tone crisp, controlled and refusing to hide in the shadows, these works by rather obscure late-Romantic European composers are a joy. (FP) ★★★★

Elle **Works by Elena Kats-Chernin, Rachel Portman et al**
Angèle Dubeau (violin); La Pietà
Analekta AN28754

This Canadian group, led by Dubeau, always delivers the goods, with accessible and wide-ranging programmes. Marking 25 years, *Elle* brings together works by women composers both familiar and unsung, from Hildegard to Isobel Waller-Bridge. Very fine playing. (MB) ★★★★

Excuse the mess, Vols 1 & 2
Works by Hannah Peel et al
Various Artists
Hidden Notes HDNTS0003DA/4DA

The 'excuse the mess' podcast sees various composers create new works in a day – with just one instrument. Written for everything from music box to pesto jar, the results are as engaging and exhilarating as you can imagine. (FP) ★★★★

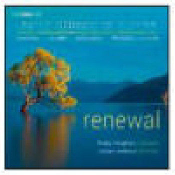
From Windsor with Love
Various Songs
The Queen's Six
Signum Classics SIGCD698

You can't deny the work that has gone into making these arrangements of popular love songs for six *a cappella* male voices, or the quality of the performances. You'll need a large pack of crackers for all this cheese, though, and the beat-boxing is a bit much. (MB) ★★

Reflections
Works by Bach, Ravel and Cage
Romain Nosbaum (piano)
Ars Produktion ARS38326

Nosbaum's reasons for placing Bach, Ravel and Cage side by side may be spurious, but on repeated listening it all makes for a somewhat invigorating listen. The performance is perky, though perhaps a little unrelenting at times in what is a very over-saturated acoustic. (MB) ★★★

Renewal
Works by Mendelssohn, Osvaldo Golijov, Caroline Shaw et al
Ruby Hughes (soprano) et al; United Strings of Europe
BIS BIS-2549

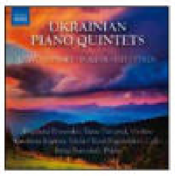


The majority of works here are heard in arrangements – not that you'd necessarily know. Choral works by Caroline Shaw and Joanna Marsh are just as impactful for string orchestra. The Golijov songs with soprano Ruby Hughes are a fitting centrepiece. (FP) ★★★★

Two Marimbas in Berlin
Works by JS Bach, Chopin, Haydn, Rachmaninov et al
DoubleBeats
Naxos 8.574056

Who'd have thought that Chopin's flowing bel canto lines or Bach's intricate counterpoint would work so well on a pair of marimbas? Add in some playful Haydn and Piazzolla plus a deft new work by Minoru Miki, and you have a very enjoyable mix. (JP) ★★★★

Ukrainian Piano Quintets
Works by Poleva, Silvestrov and Lyatoshynsky
Bogdana Pivnenko, Taras Yaropud (violin), Kateryna Suprun (viola) et al
Naxos 8.579098



From the folky and fiery opening to Lyatoshynsky's *Ukrainian Quintet* to the more subdued world of Victoria Poleva's *Simurgh-Quintet*, this is a terrific introduction to an unfamiliar corner of the chamber repertoire. (JP) ★★★★

Reviewers:** Michael Beek* **(MB), Freya Parr* **(FP)***, Jeremy Pound* **(JP)**

GETTY

The month in box-sets

Confident virtuoso: Frédéric Lodéon's precocious talent is on display

Big birthdays and Haydn symphonies

This month's round-up salutes John Williams and Frédéric Lodéon

Marking the composer's 90th birthday, ***John Williams & The Boston Pops Orchestra – Complete Philips Recordings*** *(Decca 485 1590)* focuses on his years as the ensemble's music director. This 21-disc collection showcases the colourful programming that made his 14-year tenure such a hit with audiences. Williams's music is here, but there's plenty of variety – including a *Peter & The Wolf* with Dudley Moore as narrator, two albums with the great Jessye Norman, discs of marches and overtures and tributes to Gershwin and Bernstein. A treat.

Frédéric Lodéon – The Flamboyant *(Erato 9029654625)* is a another complete set, this time taking in recordings made for Erato and EMI by the French cellist, who turned 70 in January. Lodéon was a precocious young talent, and his confident virtuosity is on display across 21 discs of recordings made in the 1970s and '80s, largely of concerto and chamber works. Performing partners here include greats such as Jean-Pierre Rampal and Pierre Amoyal, and the set includes a good many premieres.

The set is a treasure trove of performances from across Europe

The Berlin Philharmonic celebrates 240 years this year and in ***30 Years of Europakonzert*** *(EuroArts 8024268834)*, viewers are treated to some 48 hours of music across 31 Blu-ray discs. Filmed from 1991-2021, the annual celebration of the orchestra's founding has become a popular fixture in the classical calendar, which moves to a different city each year. The set is a treasure trove of performances on stages everywhere from London to Lisbon and features a dazzling cast of conductors including Abbado, Boulez, Haitink and Jansons.

If you think that's a big undertaking, just imagine the size of the box needed for Giovanni Antonini's Haydn symphonies project when it's finished. That's a way off yet, so you can start a little smaller with ***Haydn 2032 – Vols 1-10*** *(Alpha Classics ALPHA774)*. As the title suggests, this release gathers together the first ten albums released in the series so far (2014-21). Ambitious though it may be, the project has so far reaped rich rewards with stunning recordings and fabulous performances.

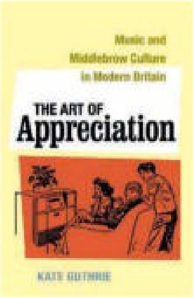
Books

Our critics cast their eyes over this month's selection of books on classical music

The Art of Appreciation – Music and Middlebrow Culture in Modern Britain
Kate Guthrie

California Press 295pp (hb) £50.83

In interwar and post-War Britain, classical music was enjoyed by sizeable audiences drawn from all classes. This informative new book analyses how the music-appreciation movement used recordings, broadcasts, books, lectures and performances to engage a wide public. Walford Davies taught adults how to listen more intently in a long-running interwar radio series. Robert Mayer's concerts for children had reached 130,000 young people by 1939. Wilfred Mellers's pioneering evening classes in post-War Birmingham offered an exhaustive education in early music. Music-appreciation evangelists lobbied successfully for more music in schools.

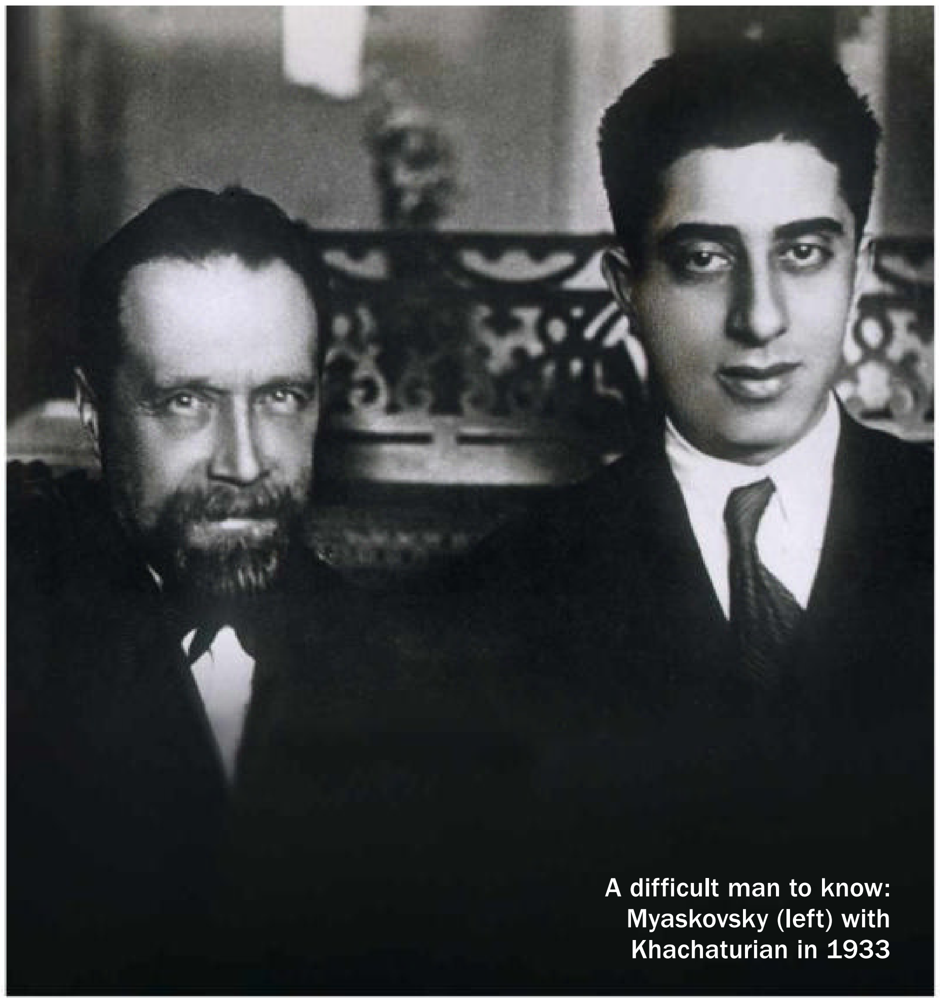


Aimed primarily at academic readers, this book is more critique than celebration. The case studies are fascinating, but the general reader may find themselves puzzled by Guthrie's apparent distaste for the music appreciation movement's underpinning ideals of cultivation and 'uplift', its perpetuation of the musical canon and its so-called 'presumptive paternalism'. From the perspective of an era in which classical music is off most people's radar, denigrated as elitist and marginalised in the school curriculum, surely we can find much to admire in these well-intentioned, well-received mid-century endeavours? *Alexandra Wilson* ★★★

It Began in Florence
Gordon Thomas

SellMyBooks 422pp (pb) £10.99

British composer Ethel Smyth (1858-1944) was a courageously unconventional figure for the times she lived in. Smyth conducted her own operas, was imprisoned for her activism as a suffragette and had numerous same-sex relationships. Smyth's work has all too often been marginalised but her accomplishments make her a fascinating figure worthy of greater attention. Gordon L. Thomas's intriguing novel seeks to redress this imbalance by celebrating Smyth with a fictionalised account of her life.



A difficult man to know: Myaskovsky (left) with Khachaturian in 1933

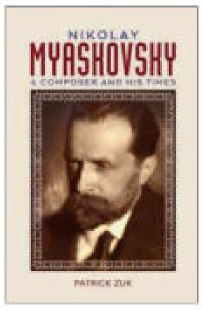
GETTY

Self-published and clearly sparked by an intense personal interest, the novel is painstakingly researched in piecing together Smyth's earlier life, with a focus on her relationship with the writer Harry Brewster. The narrative is fast-paced but the writing is often clunky. At times it feels more like a biography with added dialogue, while the descriptions of Smyth's romantic attachments are oddly outdated and at times make for uncomfortable reading. Nonetheless, Thomas's enthusiasm shines through the book and his stated aim to draw further attention to Smyth's life and work is certainly accomplished. *Kate Wakeling* ★★

Nikolay Myaskovsky – A Composer and His Times
Patrick Zuk

Boydell Press 548pp (hb) £60

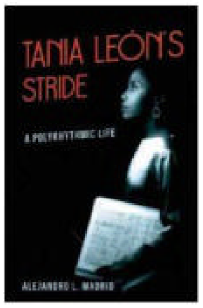
Here at last is an authoritative, readable and impeccably researched study of Russian music's most elusive composer. Those interested in the times in which Myaskovsky lived will also learn much about the last imperial days, the revolution, two wars and a hostile environment for musical individuality; the background provided by Patrick Zuk, Professor of Music at Durham University, is impeccable. I'm especially grateful to him for more on fascinating figures who provided more consistent support than Prokofiev, who shared the same class at the St Petersburg Conservatoire: foremost are the Derzhanovskys and Pavel Lamm, offering humane solidarity with a difficult man. Depressive, lacking in self-confidence but also much loved and a figure of total integrity in facing the attacks on musical 'formalism' – the last, in 1948, may have hastened his end – Myaskovsky gave away little about his inner life. But his music can be passionate if rarely sensuous, never plays to the gallery and follows its own course; Zuk's careful use of musical examples enhances a balanced view of an uneven output. *David Nice* ★★★★★



Tania León's Stride – A Polyrhtyhmic Life
Alejandro L Madrid

Illinois Press 264pp (pb) £18.99

In 2021, Cuban-American composer, conductor and educator Tania León (b1943) received the Pulitzer Prize for Music for her orchestral piece *Stride*. Titled for the resilience of women walking toward their goals no matter the obstacles, its premiere the previous year by the New York Philharmonic was itself a triumph of personal and socio-cultural perseverance: from 1993-6, León had been Composer Fellow at the orchestra, yet received only one performance – in Germany, where the soloist cancelled at the last minute.



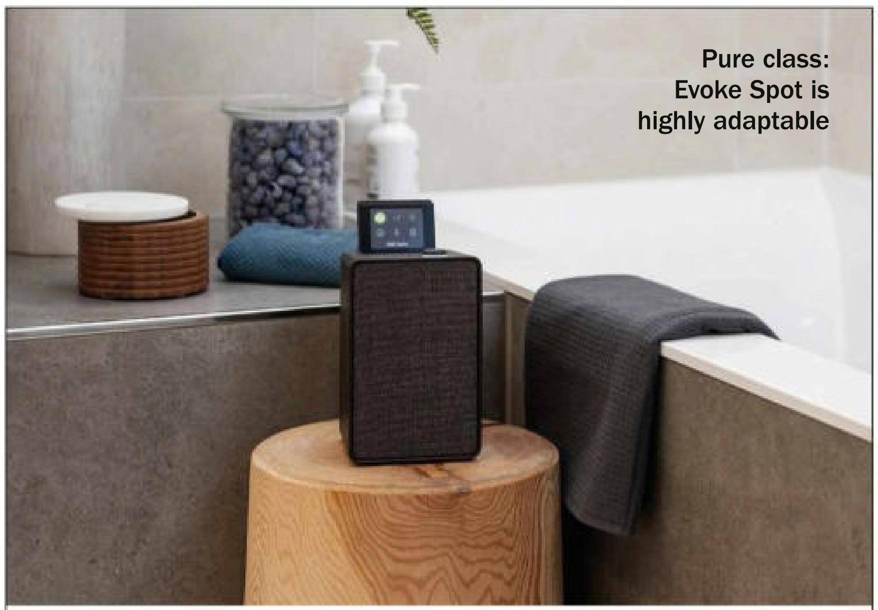
The complex, intersecting race and gender issues underpinning these and other significant events in León's extraordinary diasporic life to date form the basis of this thought-provoking biography. Honouring her long rejection of labels such as 'black woman composer' or 'Afro-Cuban music', it shows how León rather 'understands life, culture and humanity as ontologically creole' – hence fluid and not reducible to fixed identities.

It's an approach which, in celebrating at last this pioneer, addresses vital questions about current discourses around mainstream and marginalised cultures. *Steph Power* ★★★★

Audio choice

Chris Haslam chooses the best hi-fi equipment for your classical music listening

THIS MONTH: DAB RADIOS



Pure class: Evoke Spot is highly adaptable

BEST COMPACT DESIGN

Pure Evoke Spot £179.99

British brand Pure's Evoke range has been fully revamped (there's also the more powerful Play (£250) and Home (£400), which includes a CD player). All have a flip-up 2.4-inch colour display and are available in either coffee black or cotton white with a recycled wool grille. The Spot has a 3-inch full range driver, 20 watts of power, DAB/DAB+/FM, Internet Radio, Bluetooth 4.2 and Spotify Connect built-in (for subscribers) for seamless streaming over Wi-Fi. It's more a streaming speaker than a simple radio, yet its ease of use and preset buttons will appeal to techies and traditionalists alike. **pure.com**

BEST PORTABLE DAB

Roberts Revival Petite £99.99

This radio is positively Lilliputian – a mere 12.4 x 7.6cm. It not only looks great, with six stylish colours and a classic transistor feel, but also manages to sound good and boasts Bluetooth, DAB, DAB+ FM and Aux-in plus a 20-hour battery life. It makes a great travel option and sounds more accomplished than it has any right to. Quality suffers when you turn the volume up to max, but that is hardly surprising given the miniscule proportions. **robertsradio.com**

Not all wooden: the Mk4 sounds and looks splendid

BBC music MAGAZINE BEST BUY

BEST ALL-ROUND

Ruark R1 Mk4 £239

One of the most impressive aspects of Ruark Audio is their ability to keep both audio- and designophiles happy, regularly winning awards for performance while their products pop up in the world's swankier hotel rooms. Now into its fourth generation, the R1 remains one the best-looking DAB radios available. The solid wood casing of old has gone, in favour of a vibration-resistant polymer – in cream, espresso or blue – but they have kept the organic aesthetic with a gorgeous wooden grille.

But what about features and performance? The R1 has DAB/DAB+ and FM tuner (with eight presets), you can plug in a media player via 3.5mm jack or USB-C (which can also charge your gadgets), and there's Bluetooth 4.2 streaming which, while not the latest version, is perfectly adequate. The display may not be as fancy as that of the Pure (see left) but it has refreshingly large text and scanning for stations takes seconds.

This is a premium-price radio with wireless streaming – rather than a jack-of-all-trades smart speaker – and though it lacks features like voice control, it sounds splendid, with spoken word, vocals and instrumentation all effortlessly smooth, articulated and engaging. **ruarkaudio.com**

NEED TO KNOW

What's available? Besides desktop/kitchen styles featured here, there's also a good range of battery-powered options – try Sony's £70 XDR-P1DBP – and bedside designs, with radios such as the Roberts Ortus also having wireless charging from as little as £89.

Which features? Most DAB radios now feature Bluetooth for wireless streaming convenience, but live radio fans will want easy-to-use preset buttons for instant access to favorite stations across DAB, FM and even internet if it is Wi-Fi enabled. A digital display for time, date and programme information may also be useful.

What is DAB+? It is essentially an upgrade of DAB, three times as efficient so it can carry many more stations and at much higher audio quality. It uses the same transmitters and most broadcast on both, but there are now over 180 stations broadcasting on DAB+ in the UK, including 19 national stations.

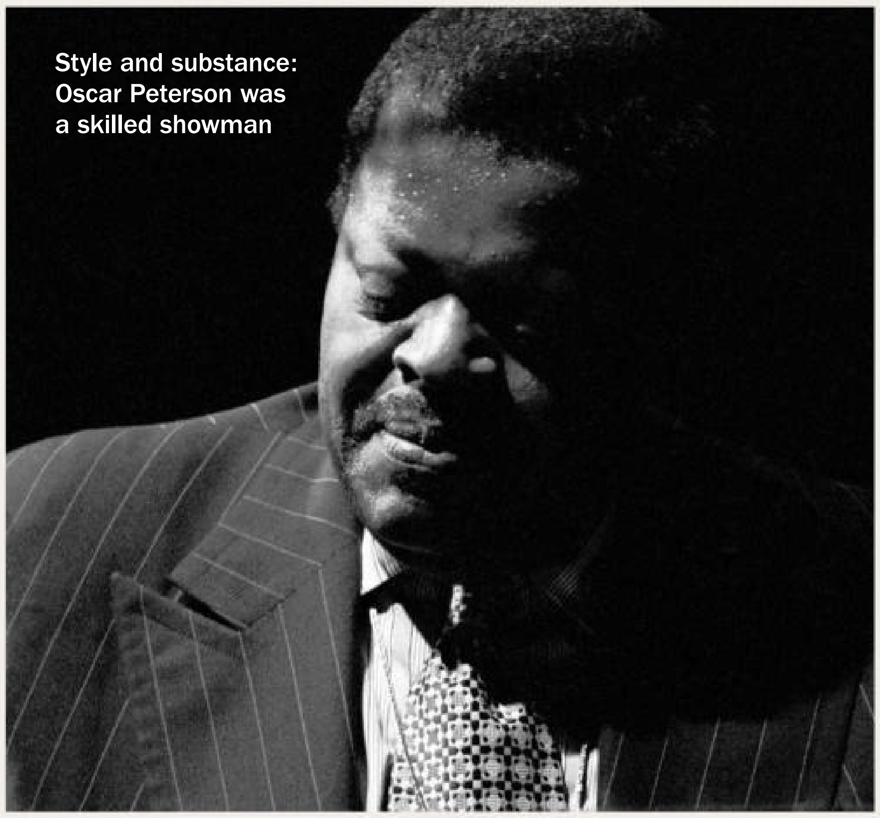
Jazz

This month *Barry Witherden* highlights classic live sets and lockdown albums

JAZZ CHOICE

Vintage Peterson glows

This 1987 live recording from Helsinki shows the Oscar Peterson Quartet at its joyful best



Style and substance: Oscar Peterson was a skilled showman

Oscar Peterson

A Time for Love

Oscar Peterson (piano), Joe Pass (guitar), Dave Young (bass), Martin Drew (drums)

Mack Avenue MAC1151 (2 CDs)

Oscar Peterson has always had special significance for me: the first concert I ever went to was by his trio, featuring a rhythm section recently poached from Cannonball Adderley, but I already loved many of his recordings. (I confess that may have had some influence on making this album the Choice amidst very strong competition.) *A Time for Love* finds him in Helsinki in 1987 leading his quartet at the end of a long world tour, with 14 dates in Europe alone.

I don't always enjoy players who employ an abundance of notes to dazzle the ear, but Peterson's work is so full of joyfulness, good humour, exuberance, wit and indeed elegance that it wins me over, and there is always musical logic and substance rather than mere virtuosity in his improvisations. Slower numbers, especially, clearly reveal his talent for development and apposite phrasing, plus he can get bluesy with it: witness the opening track 'Cool Walk' and even passages in the epic, kaleidoscopic 'Salute to Bach'.

Guitarist Joe Pass, bass player Dave Young and drummer Martin Drew, all consistently reliable and supportive in accompaniment, also make good use of their time in the limelight. ★★★★★

Live at the Village Vanguard by ***Christian McBride and Inside Straight*** is a glorious session of neo-hard-bop, demonstrating

that there is still plenty of life in the genre. Performed in 2014 during one of McBride's regular December residencies, the crack team of saxophonist Steve Wilson, pianist Peter Martin, drummer Carl Allen and vibes-player Warren Wolf bustles through a programme of excellent compositions. The pace relaxes for McBride's charming gospel-tinged 'Uncle James' and Wilson's tribute to Maya Angelou, although on both Wilson's playing is among the most intense on the album. In all, another example of the gripping, high-quality music we expect from a McBride project. *(Mack Avenue MAC1192)* ★★★★★

Australian pianist-composer-improviser ***Alister Spence*** has received critical acclaim around the world but still deserves to be more widely known. ***Curve*** was recorded in Sweden in 2011. (One consequence of the pandemic was that musicians and labels, with limited opportunities to present new work even in the studio, trawled their archives and released valuable music that might otherwise have

been overlooked.) This was Spence's second album with bassist Joe Williamson and percussionist Christopher Cantillo. The 12 freely-improvised pieces here feel like a suite, an intriguing, sometimes mysterious journey through textures, moods and melodic ideas, with each musician demonstrating exemplary responsiveness and sensitivity to what the others are playing. *(Alister Spence Music ASM012)* ★★★★

The fusion of jazz with hip-hop in practice has often, against expectation, succeeded well: witness especially Soweto Kinch's pioneering work. On ***Kinfolk 2: See the Birds***, ***Nate Smith*** creates a cohesive album from disparate elements, as much by skilfully balancing fairly undiluted jazz alongside rap tracks rather than creating a completely homogenous mixture on each piece. Saxophonist

Jaleel Shaw contributes some stirring solos and Smith's quintet is augmented here and there by distinguished guests including Regina Carter and Vernon Reid. All play with panache and conviction. *(Edition EDN1184)* ★★★★

Deprived by Covid of opportunities to perform these compositions 'live' in studio or concert ***Ivo Neame*** pulled ***Glimpses of Truth*** together by recording and mixing the participants' contributions remotely. As Neame rightly claims for this project, good players can produce spontaneous, interactive music even without all being in the same place at the same time. The ensembles are tight and

there are plenty of fine solos. Taking its inspiration from varied sources, from bizarre conspiracy theories ('The Rise of the Lizard People') to classic Minimalism ('Phasing Song'), the album is consistently engaging and absorbing, demonstrating that if the result is good enough the methodology scarcely matters. *(Whirlwind Recordings WR4782)* ★★★★

Ex-Voto by electronica-rooted trio ***Monocled Man*** was inspired by *Erewhon* and other books by Samuel Butler. In the shadow of two years of Covid pandemic and six

years of political divisiveness, it's no surprise that the music has a foreboding core, yet there is also much that sounds positive and defiant, partly due to compelling rhythms. Elegant, yet incisive soloing from Rory Simmons's mellow trumpet and passages of atmospheric scoring evoke distant echoes of late-period Miles Davis and Gil Evans. *(Whirlwind Recordings WR4781)* ★★★★

TAKE FIVE

An interview with today's finest jazz musicians

In the moment: Melissa Aldana wants to be open to all possibilities

This month: Melissa Aldana

With a grandfather and father who were saxophonists (and, since she was six, a practice regime of seven or eight hours a day, which she still maintains), it is unsurprising that Chilean saxophonist Melissa Aldana made her mark on the local Santiago scene as a teenager. Then, almost inevitably, she decided to develop her career in New York. 'In Chile, I didn't feel I had the potential to progress like I would in the US. There is no place like New York for this.'

She has been quoted as saying that managing the ego is crucial for performing musicians. 'The ego usually protects us, but when it comes to music I want to be vulnerable. When I'm on stage, if I don't allow myself to just be in the moment, which to me is the most beautiful thing, I'm not going to be able to find what I want to say. It's about us, the band, and the moment and the people.'

> 'The ego usually protects us, but when it comes to music I want to be vulnerable'

She sees some parallels between her career and that of the Mexican painter Frida Kahlo. Does this include facing prejudice against women artists, which other female saxophonists have revealed that they still encounter? 'It was never about gender, although I guess that was how it was presented. I found that her art is so honest, a true reflection of her life, of who she is as a person, and that was my inspiration.'

In 2019 *Paste* magazine nominated Aldana as one of 12 women influencing the future of jazz. So how does she currently see the future of her own music? 'What is coming now is that I'm writing more music, and we're developing a band concept. My dream has always been to be a bandleader and get to the point where I can call my guys and say we're going off for a month, everyone is being paid well so we can have the experience of playing every day, and growing and developing every day as a band. That's so hard for young musicians to get today and, if I think of the future of the music, the development has a lot to do with the people that you play with'. ***Barry Witherden***

TAD HERSHORN, EDUARDO PAVEZ GOYE

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Live choice

Paul Riley picks the month's best concert and opera highlights in the UK

András Schiff and Quatuor Mosaïques
Wigmore Hall, London, 28 February – 4 March
Web: *wigmore-hall.org.uk*
Haydn is an underrated composer, reckons pianist András Schiff, who puts his stamina on the line to spearhead a five-concert Haydnfest that explores the piano sonatas and trios, string quartets (Opp. 20 and 76) and the English Canzonettas – the latter shared between soprano Louise Alder and tenor Kieran Carrel.

Britten Sinfonia
Milton Court, London, 4 March
Web: *brittensinfonia.com*
Later in the month, Britten Sinfonia returns to Milton Court with tenor Ian Bostridge and conductor James MacMillan for a folk-inspired programme. But first, under Jonathan Bloxham, the urban experience links Brett Dean's *Pastoral* Symphony, Steve Reich's New York-indebted *City Life* and the premiere of a new piece by Dobrinka Tabakova.

New Generations Artists' Weekend
Britten Studio, Snape Maltings, 5, 6 March
Web: *brittenpearsarts.org*
Culminating in Chausson's smouldering Concert for violin, piano and string quartet, the current crop of BBC New Generation Artists – including the Mona Quartet, Mithras Trio, pianist Tom Borrow and soprano Ema Nikolovska – is put through its paces across four concerts.

Welsh National Opera
Wales Millennium Centre, Cardiff, from 5 March
Web: *wno.org.uk*
Some two decades after its first airing, Katie Mitchell's searing production of Janácek's *Jenůfa* is revived under Welsh National Opera's music director Tomáš Hanus, a conductor born in the composer's adopted home city and with the music in his blood.

KAUPO KIKKAS, JAMES MOLLISON

Mezzo at Maltings: Ema Nikolovska sings in the Britten Studio

Scottish Chamber Orchestra
Queen's Hall, Edinburgh, 6, 10, 17 March
Web: *sco.org.uk*
Finnish violinist Pekka Kuusisto masterminds three ear-opening concerts. The first is bookended by composers Nico Muhly and Steve Reich; the second pairs Beethoven's Romance No. 1 and Pēteris Vasks's *Distant Light* Violin Concerto; and the third lives the American dream alongside Stravinsky, Copland and the UK premiere of Muhly's Violin Concerto, *Shrink*.

Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment
Royal Festival Hall, London, 8 March
Web: *southbankcentre.co.uk*
The period instrument orchestra doesn't just bring 'enlightenment' to the 18th century. It has also ventured through Schumann and Liszt to Wagner and Schoenberg, and now hunts out Mahler as part of its 'Wilderness Pleases' season. Ádám Fischer conducts Symphony No. 4, the *Adagietto* from the Fifth Symphony and three songs from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*. The soprano is Masabane Cecilia Rangwanasha.

Gweneth-Ann Rand
Kettle's Yard, Cambridge, 10 March
Web: *kettlesyard.co.uk*
Joined by pianist Simon Lepper, the soprano scales early Schoenberg and late Richard Strauss – the Vier Lieder, Op. 2 and the elegiac *Four Last Songs* respectively. Interleaved are songs by George Crumb and Florence Price.

Sounds of Now
Theatre Deli, Sheffield, 11 March
Web: *musicintheround.co.uk*
Guitarist Tom McKinney curates a new contemporary music strand for Sheffield-based Music in the Round. Singer Elaine Mitchener and Apartment House set the ball rolling with a lively line-up bookended by Christian Wolff and Charles Mingus's String Quartet No. 1.

Les Arts Florissants
Saffron Hall, Saffron Walden, 13 March
Web: *saffronhall.com*
With a repeat at London's Barbican the following night, director William Christie and his Baroque specialists tackle Handel's pastoral ode *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*, a reworking of Milton with a dash of Jennens. The soloists are Rachel Redmond, James Way and Sreten Manojlovic.

Czech Philharmonic Orchestra
Barbican, London, 15, 16 March
Web: *barbican.org.uk*
Stravinsky's Concerto for Piano and Winds aside (soloist Yuja Wang), conductor Semyon Bychkov mines a rich seam of Czech nationalism over his orchestra's two-concert residency. Stravinsky shares the first evening with Smetana's cycle *Ma Vlást*; the second pairs Dvořák's Symphony No. 8 with Janáček's mighty *Glagolitic Mass*.

Scottish Opera
Concert Hall, Perth, 18 March
Web: *scottishopera.org.uk*
Hot on the heels of Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in Edinburgh at the start of the month, Scottish Opera heads north for a Pushkin-inspired double bill that contrasts Rachmaninov's *The Miserly Knight* with Stravinsky's *Mavra*, a witty tale of thwarted love. The conductor is Stuart Stratford.

Emerson Quartet
Queen Elizabeth Hall, London, 16-18 March
Web: *southbankcentre.co.uk*
After nearly half a century of concert-giving, the American quartet is calling it a day in 2023. It's not going quietly, though. A complete London Shostakovich cycle is in prospect, with all 15 quartets presented chronologically over five concerts. The first instalment will reach No. 9.

BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra
City Halls, Glasgow, 17 March
Web: *glasgowconcerthalls.com*
It was only to be expected that a concert billed as 'Volkov in Venice' would scarcely be awash with Vivaldi – principal guest conductor Ilan Volkov is renowned for enterprising and unusual programming. So, framed by Rameau and Haydn, Bruno Maderna's *Venetian Journal* and orchestrations of Frescobaldi are the headline works. (See 'Backstage with…', right).

Royal Opera
Covent Garden, London, 17-31 March
Web: *roh.org.uk*
After the success of her 2019 *Billy Budd*, Deborah Warner is becoming the Royal Opera's go-to director for Britten. Now she squares up to his first operatic triumph: *Peter Grimes*. Allan Clayton is the eponymous fisherman, and a strong cast also includes Bryn Terfel, Maria Bengtsson and John Tomlinson. Mark Elder conducts.

Ulster Orchestra
Ulster Hall, Belfast, 18 March
Web: *ulsterorchestra.org.uk*
He might be better known as a fortepianist, but back in 2016 Ronald Brautigam commissioned Sally Beamish's Piano Concerto: *Hill Stanzas*, a work suffused with the spirit of the Cairngorms. He partners it with Mozart's piano concerto swansong: K595. Meanwhile, Sibelius's Symphony No. 3 wraps up an evening conducted by Jac van Steen.

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra
Hall for Cornwall, Truro, 18 March
Web: *hallforcornwall.co.uk*
Cornwall's pre-eminent arts venue reopened last year after a major refurbishment, and the long-awaited return of conductor Kirill Karabits and the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra opens with, appropriately, Beethoven's *Consecration of the House Overture* and Bax's *Tintagel*. Also included are Sibelius's Symphony No. 3 and a new work by Carmen Ho.

Dunedin Consort
Greyfriars Kirk, Edinburgh, 18 March
Web: *dunedin-consort.org.uk*
Celebrating its quarter-century, the Dunedin Consort blows out the birthday candles in style with two of Purcell's odes: *Welcome to all the pleasures* and *Why, why are all the muses mute?*. The muses couldn't be less mute, however, as director John Butt adds Handel, Corelli and Blow to a party that spills over into Glasgow the following night.

BBC Philharmonic
Bridgewater Hall, Manchester, 19 March
Web: *bridgewater-hall.co.uk*
The collaborative Manchester celebration of Vaughan Williams's 150th anniversary continues apace, as the Hallé Choir teams up with the BBC Philharmonic under Andrew Davis for the Whitman-setting *Toward the Unknown Region*. A potent musical portrait is completed by *Job: A Masque for Dancing* and Symphony No. 4.

Gonzaga Band
St Mary's Collegiate Church, Warwick, 22 March
Web: *leamingtonmusic.org*
Leamington Music began the year in Venice. Now the focus shifts to Milan, where The Gonzaga Band takes the musical temperature of the city around 1600 – a time when virtuoso violin playing and singing flourished under the watchful eye of Cima, Bovicelli and Caterina Assandra.

Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir
Kings Place, London, 26 March
Web: *kingsplace.co.uk*
Four of Estonia's leading choral composers are featured as, under Tõnu Kaljuste, the country's world-renowned choir is mindful of its 40th anniversary. Music by Cyrillus Kreek and Toivo Tulev is woven around Arvo Pärt and works by Veljo Tormis that include the elemental *Curse upon Iron*.

BACKSTAGE WITH…
Conductor Ilan Volkov

No Haydn place: 'Everything is out there and everything is open'

Your concert in Glasgow with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra on 17 March features Maderna's rarely played *Venetian Journal*. Can you tell us about it?
Maderna was one of the first composers I got into when I was in my teens, but I have had very few opportunities to conduct his music. It's fanastic finally to programme something! He was an amazing composer, but when he died aged just 53 in 1973, this and many others of his pieces got lost – very few of them became part of the repertoire. This piece is like a collage of ideas and quotations, with an emphasis on bel canto opera, and there is a lot of pastiche in it. The text is a mixture of English and Italian, and there is also a tape part which is very personal, as it has recordings of Maderna's family. The way the piece is notated also gives you a lot of freedom as to how you want to perform it.

It's quite rare to see Maderna taking centre stage, isn't it?
Yes, this is not what happens most of the time! But this is the joy of working with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra – we can create a lot of projects from the angle of a new work. Doing it this way has now become quite a norm for me, even when we are performing at the BBC Proms. When we take a new piece and then start to think about what would go perfectly with it, putting it in this sort of context is, I think, the best way to make the new piece shine. We think about music that relates to the piece and music that contrasts with it, and this is exactly what we have done with this concert. I knew that Maderna made many wonderful arrangements of older composers, so programming Frescobaldi and Rameau was a natural next step.

And you finish with Haydn's Symphony No. 82, *The Bear*…
The Bear is a symphony that I have conducted before but wanted to do again. There are so many of Haydn's symphonies to choose from, but you really need to have more than one chance at them. I find them some of the most difficult pieces to perform with an orchestra, to be honest, because the texture is so clear and every little thing is so noticeable – you can't hide behind the lush orchestration of, say, Richard Strauss or even Beethoven. As with Rameau, everything is out there and everything is open, and there are a lot of solos. And such a joyful, exuberant piece fits with the Rameau as well, so there is a good connection there too, I think.

TV&Radio

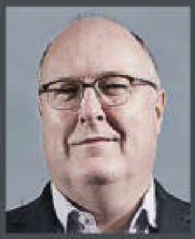
Your complete guide to what's on Radio 3 this month, plus TV highlights

BBC RADIO 3 90–93FM

MARCH'S RADIO 3 LISTINGS

Schedules may be subject to alteration. For up-to-date listings see Radio Times

Three to look out for



Alan Davey, the controller of BBC Radio 3, picks out three great moments to tune into this March

International Women's Day
All the live music you will hear across Radio 3 on International Women's Day will be written and produced by female composers and sound engineers. The BBC Singers will perform a set of world premieres before we head to Kings Place to rediscover Maddalena Casulana's lost madrigals.
BBC Radio 3: 8 March

Forty years of the Barbican Centre
To celebrate its 40th birthday, the Barbican presents a programme of music as provocative as the brutalism of the building itself. Judith Weir's choral work *Concrete* pays homage to its bold architecture, and the concert ends with Elgar's Cello Concerto, performed at the venue's first concert in 1982.
Radio 3 in Concert: 4 March, 7.30pm

Dame Myra Hess Celebration
In its Wigmore Hall series, the Nash Ensemble recreates Myra Hess's legendary lunchtime recitals performed at the National Gallery during World War II. The concerts featured popular composers of the day: Bax, Ireland and Warlock.
Radio 3 in Concert: 15 March, 7.30pm

1 TUESDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Clementi (rpt)
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-5pm Afternoon Concert
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm In Tune Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert from City Halls, Glasgow. Webern *Passacaglia for orchestra*, Schoenberg *Lied ver waldtaube (Gurrelieder)*, Bruckner *Symphony No. 4*. Karen Cargill (mezzo-soprano), BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra/Alpesh Chauhan
10-10.45pm Music Matters
10.45-11pm The Essay
11pm-12.30am Night Tracks

2 WEDNESDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Clementi (rpt)
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-4pm Afternoon Concert
4-5pm Choral Evensong live from Lincoln Cathedral on Ash Wednesday
5-7.30pm In Tune plus Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert from Bridgewater Hall, Manchester. Vaughan Williams *Symphony No. 3 'Pastoral'*, *On Wenlock Edge*, *Symphony No. 5*. Alessandro Fisher (tenor), BBC Philharmonic/ Mark Wigglesworth
10-10.45pm Feature
10.45-11pm The Essay
11pm-12.30am Night Tracks

3 THURSDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Clementi (rpt)
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-5pm Afternoon Concert
5-7.30pm In Tune plus Mixtape
7.30-10.45pm Radio 3 in Concert live from Symphony Hall, Birmingham. Tchaikovsky *Fantasy Overture: Romeo and Juliet*, Stravinsky *Violin Concerto*, Tchaikovsky *Symphony No. 4*. Patricia Kopatchinskaja (violin), City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra/Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla
10.45-11pm The Essay
11-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am Unclassified

4 FRIDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Clementi (rpt)
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-5pm Afternoon Concert
5-7.30pm In Tune plus Mixtape
CHOICE 7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert live from the Barbican, London. Brutalism meets orchestral beauty as the Barbican celebrates its 40th anniversary. Judith Weir *Concrete*, Elgar *Cello Concerto*, Ravel *Daphnis et Chloé*. Senja Rummukainen (cello), Adjoa Andoh (speaker), BBC Symphony Orchestra & Chorus/Sakari Oramo
10-10.45pm Feature
10.45-11pm The Essay
11pm-1am Late Junction

5 SATURDAY

7-9am Breakfast
9-11.45am Record Review
11.45am-12.30pm Music Matters
12.30-1pm This Classical Life
1-3pm Inside Music
3-4pm Sound of Cinema
4-5pm Music Planet
5-6.30pm J to Z
6.30-10pm Opera on 3 from the Royal Opera House, London. Handel *Theodora*. Joyce DiDonato (Irene), Jakub Józef Orliński (Didymus), Ed Lyon (Septimus), Gyyula Orendt (Valens), Thando Mjandana (Messenger), Orchestra and Chorus of the Royal Opera House/Harry Bicket
10pm-12 midnight New Music Show
12 midnight-1am Freeness

6 SUNDAY

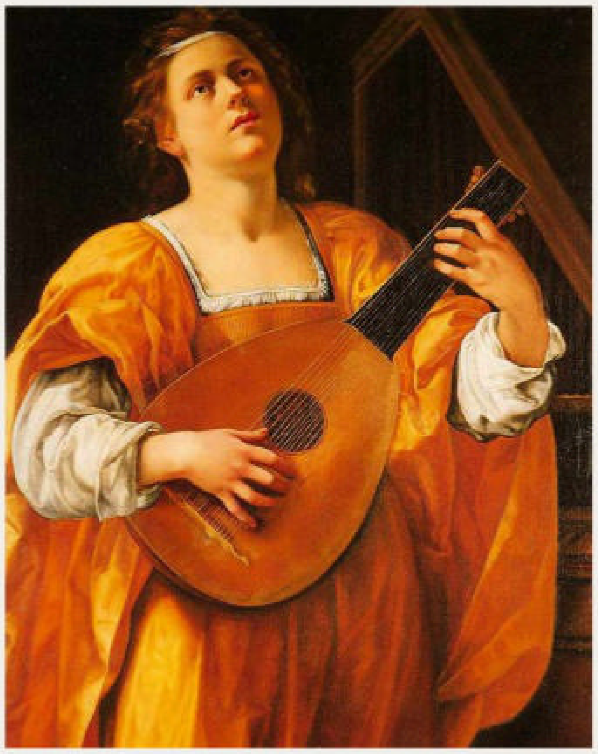
7-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Sunday Morning
12 noon-1pm Private Passions Esther Rantzen (TV journalist, founder of ChildLine and The Silver Line)
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert (rpt)
2-3pm The Early Music Show
3-4pm Choral Evensong from Lincoln Cathedral (rpt)
4-5pm Jazz Record Requests
5-5.30pm The Listening Service
5.30-6.45pm Words and Music
6.45-7.30pm Sunday Feature The Black Female Fellowship (exploring the lives of the successors of Florence Price)
7.30-9pm Drama on 3 The A to Z of Things
9-11pm Record Review Extra
11pm-12am Sunday Series
12-12.30am Classical Fix

7 MONDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Henriëtte Bosmans. Exploring the importance of family, with Dr Helen Metzelaar and Dr Lauren Vastenhout
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-4.30pm Afternoon Concert
4.30-5pm New Generation Artists
5-7.30pm In Tune plus Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert
10-10.45pm Music Matters
10.45-11pm The Essay New Generation Thinkers
11pm-12.30am Northern Drift

8 TUESDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Henriëtte Bosmans' early career as a concert pianist
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert live from Temple Church, London. International Women's Day.



A female perspective: (clockwise) Myra Hess's wartime recitals recreated; Maddalena Casulana's lost madrigals; Judith Weir celebrates the Barbican

Melissa Dunphy *I am the world (BBC Radio 3 commission, world premiere)*, Judith Bingham *The Clouded Heaven*, Ghislaine Reece-Trapp *Mass for the Mystery of Faith (world premiere)*, June Nixon *Alleluias*. Anna Lapwood (organ), BBC Singers/Grace Rossiter
2-5pm Afternoon Concert
5-7.30pm In Tune plus Mixtape
BBC RADIO 3 **CHOICE 7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert** live from Kings Place, London. International Women's Day. Newly discovered madrigals by Maddalena Casulana, alongside works by her contemporary Barbara Strozzi. Fieri Consort
10-10.45pm Music Matters
10.45-11pm The Essay New Generation Thinkers
11pm-12.30am Night Tracks

9 WEDNESDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Henriëtte Bosmans. The period of the Second World War, when she risked her life, storming the Gestapo Headquarters to get her Jewish mother released
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-4pm Afternoon Concert
4-5pm Choral Evensong from the Chapel of Keble College, Oxford. Stanford *O for a closer walk with God*, Battishill *O Lord, look down from heaven*, Kingsfold *I heard the voice of Jesus say*, Whitlock *Fantasie Choral No. 1*. Daniel Mathieson (organ), Choir of Keble College, Oxford/Paul Brough
5-7.30pm In Tune plus Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert from the Lighthouse, Poole. Jonathan Dove *Sunshine*, Mozart *Piano Concerto No. 22*, Schubert *Symphony No. 9 'Great'*. Imogen Cooper (piano), BBC SO/Mark Wigglesworth
10-10.45pm Free Thinking
10.45-11pm The Essay New Generation Thinkers
11pm-12.30am Night Tracks

10 THURSDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Henriëtte Bosmans and her friendship with Benjamin Britten
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-5pm Afternoon Concert
5-7.30pm In Tune plus Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert live from City Halls, Glasgow. Wagner *Tristan und Isolde: Prelude und Liebestod*, Vaughan Williams *The Lark Ascending*, Sibelius *Symphony No. 1*. Rosanne Philippens (violin), BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra/Mark Wigglesworth
10-10.45pm Free Thinking
10.45-11pm The Essay New Generation Thinkers
11-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am Unclassified

11 FRIDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Henriëtte Bosmans and her muse, the singer Noémie Pérugia
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-5pm Afternoon Concert
5-7.30pm In Tune plus Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert from the Barbican, London. Krása *Overture from Small Orchestra*, Haas *Study for String Orchestra*, Schulhoff *Symphony No. 5*, Messiaen *Quartet for the End of Time*. Students from the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, BBC Symphony Orchestra/Alpesh Chauhan
10-10.45pm The Verb
10.45-11pm The Essay New Generation Thinkers
11pm-1am Late Junction

12 SATURDAY

7-9am Breakfast
9-11.45am Record Review
11.45am-12.30pm Music Matters
12.30-1pm This Classical Life
1-3pm Inside Music
3-4pm Sound of Cinema
4-5pm Music Planet
5-6.30pm J to Z
6.30-10pm Opera on 3 from the Metropolitan Opera, New York. Strauss *Ariadne auf Naxos*. Lise Davidsen (Ariadne), Brenda Rae (Zerbinetta), Isabel Leonard (Composer), Brandon Jovanovich (Bacchus), Sean Michael Plumb (Harlekin), Johannes Martin Kränzle (Music Master), Thomas Allen (Major-Domo), Orchestra of the Metropolitan Opera/

GETTY, BENJAMIN EALOVEGA

String theory: Nicola Benedetti on music for children

PODCAST CHOICE
Just the Tonic

In her new eight-part podcast series *Just the Tonic*, BBC Radio 3 presenter Katie Derham explores the power of music to enrich people's lives.

For the project, Derham has teamed up with the People's Orchestra, a charity providing opportunities to amateur musicians from a range of socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds. She will talk to members of the charity about the life-changing benefits of music for those living with mental health issues, dementia, unemployment, homelessness and rehabilitation.

She will also discuss the importance of community outreach work with the Hallé's music director Mark Elder, the importance of changing attitudes towards disability in the music industry with Paraorchestra conductor Charles Hazlewood and the positive effect of children being involved in music with violinist Nicola Benedetti.

You can find Just the Tonic on Acast and all major streaming platforms.

Marek Janowski
10pm-12 midnight **New Music Show**
12 midnight-1am **Free the Music**

13 SUNDAY
7-9am **Breakfast**
9am-12 noon **Sunday Morning**
12 noon-1pm **Private Passions** Katy Brand (comedian)
1-2pm **Lunchtime Concert** (rpt)
2-3pm **The Early Music Show**
3-4pm **Choral Evensong** (rpt)
4-5pm **Jazz Record Requests**
5-5.30pm **The Listening Service**
5.30-6.45pm **Words and Music**
6.45-7.30pm **Between the Ears**
7.30-9pm **Radio 3 in Concert**
9-11pm **Record Review Extra**
11pm-12am **Sunday Series**
12-12.30am **Classical Fix**

14 MONDAY
6.30-9am **Breakfast**
9am-12 noon **Essential Classics**
12 noon-1pm **Composer of the Week** Debussy
1-2pm **Lunchtime Concert**
2-4.30pm **Afternoon Concert**
4.30-5pm **New Generation Artists**
5-7pm **In Tune**
7-7.30pm **In Tune** Mixtape
7.30-10pm **Radio 3 in Concert**
10-10.45pm **Music Matters**
10.45-11pm **The Essay**
11pm-12.30am **Northern Drift**

15 TUESDAY
6.30-9am **Breakfast**
9am-2pm **See Mon 14 March**
2-5pm **Afternoon Concert**
5-7.30pm **In Tune** plus Mixtape
BBC Radio 3 **CHOICE 7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert** from Wigmore Hall, London. Beethoven *Piano Trio in E flat*, Dyson *A poet's hymn*, Bax *The white peace*, Gardiner *Winter*, Coleridge-Taylor *A song cycle: Sons of the sea*, Keel *Trade Winds from 'Three Salt Water Ballads'*, Warlock *Captain Stratton's Fancy*, Ireland *Phantasie-Trio in A minor*, Mozart *Fantasia in C minor*, *Serenade in B flat 'Gran Partita'*. Marcus Farnsworth (baritone), Nash Ensemble
10-10.45pm **Music Matters**
10.45-11pm **The Essay**
11pm-12.30am **Night Tracks**

16 WEDNESDAY
6.30-9am **Breakfast**
9am-12 noon **Essential Classics**
12 noon-1pm **Composer of the Week** Debussy
1-2pm **Lunchtime Concert**
2-4pm **Afternoon Concert**
4-5pm **Choral Evensong** from Truro Cathedral. Southwell *Lord Jesus, think on me*, Tallis *The Dorian Service*, Gombert *Lugebat David Absalon*, Eisenach *Jesu, thou joy of loving hearts*, Bruhns *Praeludium in E minor 'Big'*. Choir of Truro Cathedral/Christopher Gray
5-7.30pm **In Tune** plus Mixtape
7.30-10pm **Radio 3 in Concert** from the Royal Festival Hall, London. Tchaikovsky *Francesca da Rimini*, *Piano Concerto No. 1*, *Symphony No. 6 'Pathétique'*. Nobuyuki Tsujii (piano), Philharmonia/ Santtu-Matias Rouvali
10-10.45pm **Free Thinking**
10.45-11pm **The Essay**
11pm-12.30am **Night Tracks**

17 THURSDAY
6.30-9am **Breakfast**
9am-12 noon **Essential Classics**
12 noon-1pm **Composer of the Week** Debussy
1-2pm **Lunchtime Concert**
2-5pm **Afternoon Concert**
5-7.30pm **In Tune** plus Mixtape
7.30-10pm **Radio 3 in Concert** from St David's Hall, Cardiff. Grace Wiliams *Sea Sketches*, Mahler *Symphony No. 5*. BBC National Orchestra of Wales/Tadaaki Otaka
10-10.45pm **Free Thinking**
10.45-11pm **The Essay**
11-11.30pm **Night Tracks**
11.30pm-12.30am **Unclassified**

18 FRIDAY
6.30-9am **Breakfast**
9am-12 noon **Essential Classics**
12 noon-1pm **Composer of the Week** Debussy
1-2pm **Lunchtime Concert**
2-5pm **Afternoon Concert**
5-7.30pm **In Tune** plus Mixtape
7.45-10pm **Radio 3 in Concert** live from Ulster Hall, Belfast. Sally Beamish *Piano Concerto No. 1 'Hill Stanzas'*, Mozart *Piano Concerto No. 27*, Sibelius *Symphony No. 3*. Ronald Brautigam (piano), Ulster Orchestra/Jac van Steen
10-10.45pm **The Verb**
10.45-11pm **The Essay**
11pm-1am **Late Junction**

19 SATURDAY
7-9am **Breakfast**
9-11.45am **Record Review**
11.45am-12.30pm **Music Matters**
12.30-1pm **This Classical Life**
1-3pm **Inside Music**
3-4pm **Sound of Cinema**
4-5pm **Music Planet**
5-6.30pm **J to Z**
6.30-10pm **Opera on 3** from the Metropolitan Opera, New York. Handel *Rodelinda*. Elza van der Heever (Rodelinda), Jamie Barton (Eduige), Iestyn Davies (Bertarido), Anthony Roth Costanzo (Unulfo), Paul Appleby (Grimoaldo), Adam Plachetka (Garibaldo), Orchestra of the Metropolitan Opera/Harry Bicket
10pm-12 midnight **New Music Show**
12 midnight-1am **Free the Music**

20 SUNDAY
7-9am **Breakfast**
9am-12 noon **Sunday Morning**
12 noon-1pm **Private Passions** Misan Harriman (photographer, social activist, first black man to shoot a cover of *British Vogue* in the magazine's history)
1-2pm **Lunchtime Concert** (rpt)
2-3pm **The Early Music Show**
3-4pm **Choral Evensong** from Truro Cathedral. Southwell *Lord Jesus, think on me*, Tallis *The Dorian Service*, Gombert *Lugebat David Absalon*, Eisenach *Jesu, thou joy of loving hearts*, Bruhns *Praeludium in E minor*. Choir of Truro Cathedral/ Christopher Gray (rpt)
4-5pm **Jazz Record Requests**
5-5.30pm **The Listening Service**
5.30-6.45pm **Words and Music**
6.45-7.30pm **Between the Ears** The Emperor and the Pianola
7.30-9pm **Drama on 3** What We May Be (Linda Marshall Griffiths)
9-11pm **Record Review Extra**
11pm-12am **Sunday Series**
12-12.30am **Classical Fix**

21 MONDAY
6.30-9am **Breakfast**
9am-12 noon **Essential Classics**

Tackling Tchaikovsky: Nobuyuki Tsujii joins the Philharmonia (16 March)

12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week The Mighty Handful (Rimsky-Korsakov, Musorgsky, Borodin)
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-4.30pm Afternoon Concert
4.30-5pm New Generation Artists
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm In Tune Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert
10-10.45pm Music Matters
10.45-11pm The Essay Different Ways of Being
11pm-12.30am Northern Drift

22 TUESDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week The Mighty Handful (Rimsky-Korsakov, Musorgsky, Borodin)
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-5pm Afternoon Concert
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm In Tune Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert from Aberystwth. Rossini *Overture: The Barber of Seville*, Elgar *Serenade for Strings*, Fauré *Pavane*, Handel arr. Harty *Water Music: selection*, Brahms *Symphony No. 2*. BBC National Orchestra of Wales/Owain Arwel Hughes
10-10.45pm Music Matters
10.45-11pm The Essay Different Ways of Being
11pm-12.30am Night Tracks

23 WEDNESDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week The Mighty Handful (Rimsky-Korsakov, Musorgsky, Borodin)
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-4pm Afternoon Concert
4-5pm Choral Evensong live from the Chapel of Jesus College, Cambridge
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm In Tune Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert from the Barbican, London. Haydn *The Creation*. London Symphony Orchestra/ Simon Rattle
10-10.45pm Free Thinking
10.45-11pm The Essay Different Ways of Being
11pm-12.30am Night Tracks

24 THURSDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week The Mighty Handful (Rimsky-Korsakov, Musorgsky, Borodin)
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-5pm Afternoon Concert
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm In Tune Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert live from the Barbican, London. Sofia Gubaidulina *Fairytale Poem (UK premiere)*, Musorgsky arr. Shostakovich *Songs and Dances of Death*, Shostakovich *Symphony No. 5*. Kostas Smorginas (bass-baritone), BBC Symphony Orchestra/ Eva Ollikainen
10-10.45pm Free Thinking
10.45-11pm The Essay Different Ways of Being
11-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am Unclassified with Elizabeth Alker

25 FRIDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week The Mighty Handful (Rimsky-Korsakov, Musorgsky, Borodin)
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-5pm Afternoon Concert
5-7.30pm In Tune plus Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert from the Barbican, London. Stravinsky *Variations (Aldous Huxley in Memoriam)*, Frank Zappa *Pedro's Dowry, Bob in Dacron, Sad Jane, Envelopes, Mo 'N Herb's Vacation, Strictly Genteel*. BBC Symphony Orchestra/Brad Lubman
10-10.45pm The Verb
10.45-11pm The Essay Different Ways of Being
11pm-1am Late Junction

26 SATURDAY

7-9am Breakfast
9-11.45am Record Review
11.45am-12.30pm Music Matters
12.30-1pm This Classical Life
1-3pm Inside Music
3-4pm Sound of Cinema
4-5pm Music Planet
5-6.30pm J to Z
6.30-10pm Opera on 3 from the Metropolitan Opera, New York. Verdi *Don Carlos*. Sonya Yoncheva (Élisabeth de Valois), Elīna Garanča (Eboli), Matthew Polenzani (Don Carlos), Etienne Dupuis (Rodrigue), Eric Owens (Philippe II), John Relyea (Grand Inquisitor), Orchestra of the Metropolitan Opera/Yannick Nézet-Séguin
10pm-12 midnight New Music Show
12 midnight-1am Free the Music

History repeats: baritone Marcus Farnsworth pays homage to Myra Hess (15 March)

27 SUNDAY

7-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Sunday Morning
12 noon-1pm Private Passions Richard Holloway (writer, former Bishop of Edinburgh)
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert (rpt)
2-3pm The Early Music Show
3-4.30pm Choral Evensong from the Chapel of Jesus College, Cambridge
4.30-5.30pm Jazz Record Requests
5.30-6.45pm Words and Music
6.45-7.30pm Sunday Feature
7.30-9pm Drama on 3 Middlemarch Monologues
9-11pm Record Review Extra
11pm-12am Sunday Series
12-12.30am Classical Fix

28 MONDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Biber (rpt)
1-10pm See Mon 21 March
10-10.45pm Music Matters
10.45-11pm The Essay
11pm-12.30am Northern Drift

29 TUESDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Biber (rpt)
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-5pm Afternoon Concert
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm In Tune Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert from Bridgewater Hall, Manchester. Vaughan Williams *Towards the Unknown Region*, *Symphony No. 4 'Job'*. Hallé Choir, BBC Philharmonic/ Andrew Davis
10-10.45pm Music Matters
10.45-11pm The Essay
11pm-12.30am Night Tracks

30 WEDNESDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Biber (rpt)
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-4pm Afternoon Concert
4-5pm Choral Evensong from the Chapel of Royal Holloway, University of London
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm In Tune Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert from Royal Festival Hall, London. Mendelssohn *Overture: A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Brahms *Four Serious Songs*, Schoenberg *Pelleas und Melisande*. Bryn Terfel (baritone), London Philharmonic Orchestra/Edward Gardner
10-10.45pm Free Thinking
10.45-11pm The Essay
11pm-12.30am Night Tracks

31 THURSDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Biber (rpt)
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-5pm Afternoon Concert
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm In Tune Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert live from City Halls, Glasgow. Debussy *Marche ecossaise sur un thème populaire*, Wim Henderickx *Clarinet Concerto 'Sutra' (BBC co-commission, world premiere)* (see BBC Music Magazine Interview, p34), Chausson *Poème de l'amour et de la mer*, Debussy *La mer*. Annalien van Wauwe (clarinet), Sarah Connolly (mezzo-soprano), BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra/ Martyn Brabbins
10-10.45pm Free Thinking
10.45-11pm The Essay
11-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am Unclassified

QUIZ ANSWERS from p104
1. Antonio Vivaldi
2. Hector Berlioz
3. Marian Anderson
4. a) Oxford; b) Linz; c) London; d) Leningrad
5. Budapest, Hungary
6. They all defected from Eastern Bloc countries
7. Maurice Ravel
8. Roger Waters
9. *Private Passions* (presented by Michael Berkeley)
10. Joshua Bell

ANDY STAPLES, GIORGIA BERTAZZI, GETTY

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THE QUIZ

It's time to put your classical music knowledge to the test...

1. Which Italian composer is often referred to by the nickname 'The Red Priest'?

2. Who in 1844 was inspired during a holiday on the Med to write the overture *La tour de Nice*, later changing the title to *Le corsaire*?

3. Who made musical history in 1955 when, as Ulrica in Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera*, she became the first Black soloist to appear at the Metropolitan Opera in New York?

4. Name the cities that the following symphonies are named or nicknamed after: a) Haydn No. 92; b) Mozart No. 36; c) Vaughan Williams No. 2; d) Shostakovich No. 7?

5. The conductors Fritz Reiner, George Szell, Eugene Ormandy and Ferenc Fricsay were all born in which city?

6. What links composer Andrzej Panufnik, ballet dancer Rudolf Nureyev, conductor Kirill Kondrashin and violinist Viktoria Mullova (above)?

7. Who in 1914 wrote about his Piano Trio that 'I am working on [it] with the sureness and lucidity of a madman', as he rushed to finish it and sign up for military service?

8. Which rock bassist and singer's French Revolution-themed opera *Ça ira* was recorded by a cast headed by Bryn Terfel in 2005?

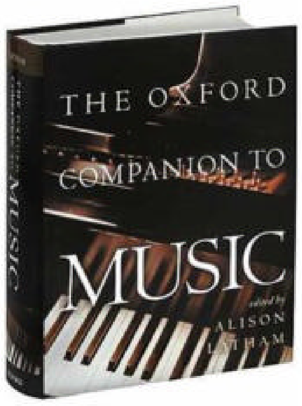
9. Introduced by *The Wakeful Poet*, a tune composed by its presenter, which Radio 3 programme first aired on 15 April 1995?

10. Which US violinist played the solos on the soundtrack of the 1998 film *The Red Violin*?

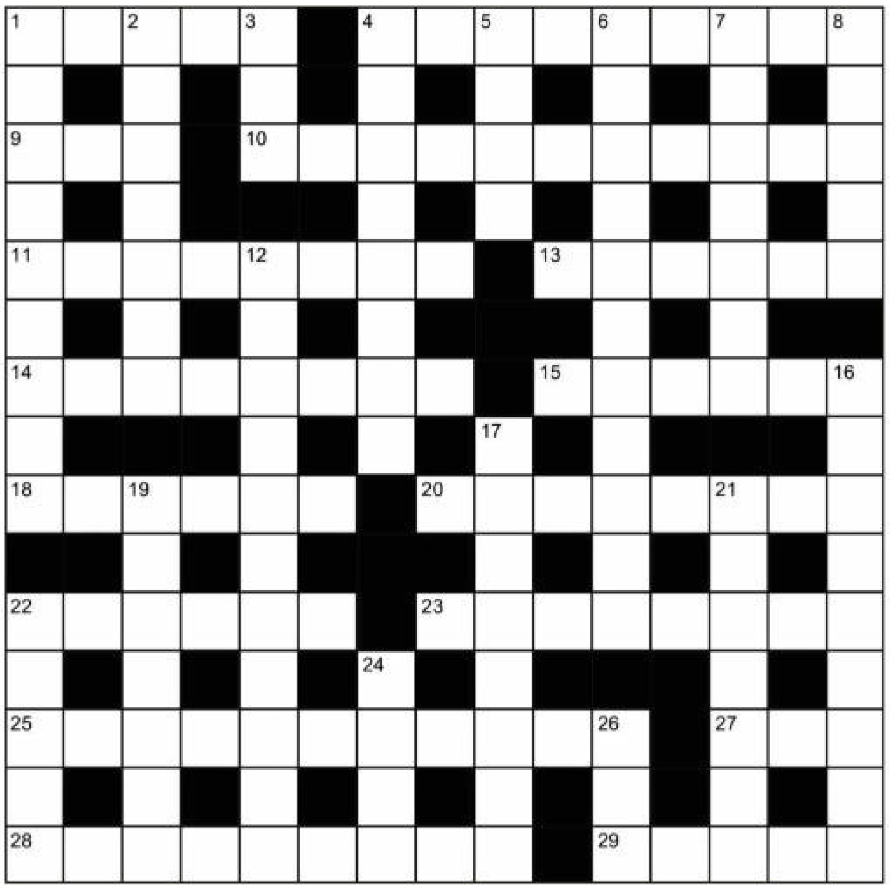
See p103 for answers

The *BBC Music Magazine* PRIZE CROSSWORD NO. 370

Crossword set by **Paul Henderson**



The first correct solution of our crossword picked at random will win a copy of **The Oxford Companion to Music.** A runner-up will win **Who Knew? Answers to Questions about Classical Music** (see oup.co.uk). Send answers to: *BBC Music Magazine*, Crossword 370/Mar 2022, PO Box 501, Leicester, LE94 0AA to arrive by 17 Mar 2022 (solution in June 2022 issue).



Your name & address ....

ACROSS

1 *Allegretto*, say, one very quiet, swamped by US city (5)
4 Rock guitarist now and then playing, involving small band, ultimately (9)
9 Owner of pipes returned for a sleep (3)
10 Solver after he solves tricky 'Beatles hit' (3,5,3)
11 Poles with question about a stage work by 23 (8)
13 Those against accepting choreographer's initial capers (6)
14 Piano lot used when playing closing piece (8)
15 Source of church music upset many in odd parts of Hull (6)
18 Gives rapturous reception to Eisteddfod successes (6)
20 The writer left poem to be performed on small reed organ (8)
22 Contralto to give voice? Here's editor, perhaps (6)
23 Composer troubled by his demon (8)
25 Arrangement of Lehár with a piano and wind instrument? (7,4)
27 Tenors accepting love child (3)
28 To organise cellist's part? A complicated procedure (9)
29 Good party with music has slow music (5)

DOWN

1 French rejection applied to musical work left upside-down? Not so much (3,6)
2 One of the Swedes supporting musical genre? They're wooden things (7)
3 Observes no leading English rock band (3)
4 See 24 down
5 Proms conductor to seek favours of director (4)
6 23's crazed lead character - eyes went peculiar, peculiar (7,4)
7 English cathedral is upset over a note that's heavenly (7)
8 Percussion – odd – coming in from the sign (5)
12 Choral hymn – what's possibly revealing in it? (5,6)
16 Rhythm of hymns, say – more gentle, not completely variable (4,5)
17 Sample from band put down to include a piano (4,4)
19 Lied or chanson no star ruined? Good (3,4)
21 Sound of exclusive artist in Strauss opera (7)
22 Position in orchestra leads to composing historic song (5)
24/4 Converted two to most of 23 – including this work? (4,3,5)
26 Feature of violin and piano, say (3)

CHRISTMAS SOLUTION
No. 367

CHRISTMAS WINNER
Nicholas Grogan, Purley

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Please note: Because of *BBC Music Magazine*'s limited office access during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, there may be a delay in receiving your prize. We apologise for any inconvenience caused.

NEXT MONTH on sale from 17 March (UK)

Daniel Barenboim

As he prepares to celebrate his 80th birthday later this year, the great pianist and conductor shares his thoughts with *Jessica Duchen*

Night music: hear works by Schoenberg on your cover CD

Arnold Schoenberg
Verklärte Nacht
Pierrot Lunaire

Performed by the Nash Ensemble with soprano Claron McFadden (reciter)

PLUS! *Brian Wise* takes a look at ***encores*** that caused a stir; the importance of ***eye contact*** is explored by *Ariane Todes*; *Freya Parr* goes on the trail of ***sea shanties***; pianist ***Joseph Middleton*** talks Lieder with *Natasha Loges*; *Mikel Toms* on the best recordings of Elgar's ***Dream of Gerontius***; and ***Rebecca Clarke*** is *Composer of the Month*

Competition terms and conditions Winners will be the senders of the first correct entries drawn at random. All entrants are deemed to have accepted the rules (see opposite) and agreed to be bound by them. The prizes shall be as stated and no cash alternatives will be offered. Competitions are open to UK residents only, except employees of Immediate Media Company Limited, the promoter and their agents. No purchase necessary. Only one entry per competition per person. Proof of postage is not proof of entry. Immediate Media Company Limited accepts no responsibility for entries lost or damaged in the post. Entrants agree to take part in any publicity related to these competitions. The judge's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. Entrants' personal details will not be used by Immediate Media Company Limited, publisher of *BBC Music Magazine*, for any other purpose than for contacting competition winners.

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Lin-Manuel Miranda

Composer, actor and director

New York-born Lin-Manuel Miranda captured the musical theatre world's attention when he arrived on Broadway at the age of just 28 with his show *In the Heights*, exploring gentrification in the Dominican American neighbourhood of Washington Heights and starring Miranda in the lead role. It was his 2015 rap musical *Hamilton* about the American Founding Father Alexander Hamilton which skyrocketed Miranda to success, now with 11 Tonys and a Pulitzer to its name. Miranda recently made his directorial debut, bringing *Rent* creator Jonathan Larson's musical *tick, tick... BOOM!* to the big screen.

GETTY

In my seventh-grade music class, we had to pick a composer to write a biography of. I picked HECTOR BERLIOZ, because I assumed from the name 'Hector' that he would be Latino. I ended up falling in love with his *Symphonie fantastique* and the way he winds these themes around one another. I remember hearing the drumroll at the end, representing the head rolling away from the guillotine. I couldn't believe classical music could do that! I did a deep dive on his music at a very formative time.

The musicals you're lucky enough to do at school become a part of you on a cellular level. I was cast as the Pirate King in *The Pirates of Penzance*. To engage with GILBERT AND SULLIVAN is to engage with a masterclass of lyric writing. Their joy in finding the right words to sit on top of the music seemed very similar to hip hop, which at the time I was equally obsessed by. Watching the Major-General working out how to rhyme 'strategy' with something else is so funny. It's something I love about the lyrical tradition of hip hop – the unexpected rhymes, rather than the pure rhymes.

I continue to find solace in the incredible Latin music I grew up with by artists like RUBÉN BLADES. He had been a curse as well as a blessing in my family, because he'd gone to law school, so my parents tried to persuade me to do the same. His music taught me how much story you can weave into the lyrics of a song. I'd danced to 'El Padre Antonio y el Monaguillo Andrés' at parties, but it was only when I heard it for about the 100th time that I realised it was about a priest getting killed. He was able to marry this real-world poetry to an incredibly danceable tune.

JONATHAN LARSON's *Rent* has a revolutionary score, but it hit me in a what-are-you-doing-with-your-life way. I saw myself in its plot, because it had a diverse cast and was the most truly contemporary New York musical I'd ever seen. It was the show that gave me permission to write musicals. It handed me a key in a very tangible way. There's a direct line between the characters in *Rent* and in my musical *In the Heights*: they are all fighting gentrification and struggling to stay in their respective neighbourhoods. Larson was really open about bringing pop and rock influences into the musical arena, just as I tried to do with Latin and hip hop. That was the thesis he threw down and which I wanted to advance.

As I've been mourning the death of STEPHEN SONDHEIM, I've been listening to the music he loved. Anyone who tells you that Sondheim isn't an influence on their work is lying. They're either emulating him or running from him. His score for *Sweeney Todd* is a masterpiece. It zigs when you think it's going to zag. When Sweeney's about to cut Judge Turpin's throat, it breaks into 'Pretty Women', one of the most beautiful ballads Sondheim ever wrote. There's a delicious tension created when he goes to beauty when you think he's going to horror. When I saw it performed recently and I heard the Johanna reprise, the line 'We learn, Johanna, to say goodbye', I burst into tears. How many different ways did Steve teach us how to say goodbye? That will be here long after the rest of us have gone. When I was working on *Hamilton*, I'd occasionally send him demos. Every time, he'd write back saying 'variety, variety, variety'. The tricky thing about writing hip hop for the stage is when our head starts bopping, we stop paying attention to the lyrics. You must always surprise the audience.

Interview by Freya Parr

The choices

Berlioz Symphonie fantastique
New York Philharmonic/Leonard Bernstein
Sony G0100026780921

Gilbert & Sullivan Pirates of Penzance
Glyndebourne/Malcolm Sargeant
Warner Classics 0950922

Rubén Blades El Padre Antonio y el Monaguillo Andrés
Elektra ELK 0060352.0

Larson Rent
Original Broadway Cast Recording
DreamWorks Records DRMD2-50003

Sondheim Sweeney Todd
Original Broadway Cast/Paul Gemignani
Masterworks Broadway G010003494120L

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Trio Gaspard

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Timothy Ridout

Following their acclaimed recordings of the string quartets of Mendelssohn, the Doric String Quartet, joined by the leading violist Timothy Ridout, explores the composer's two string quintets.

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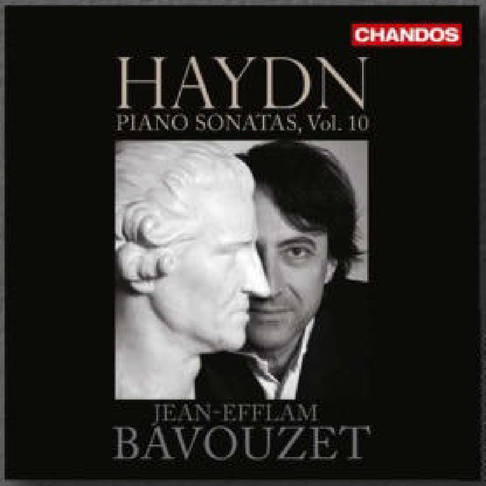
MOZART
VIOLIN SONATAS

Francesca Dego | Francesca Leonardi

Following her recent recording with Sir Roger Norrington and the RSNO of violin concertos by Mozart, Francesca Dego, with her long-term recital partner, Francesca Leonardi, turns to a selection of his violin sonatas.



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HAYDN
PIANO SONATAS, VOLUME 10

Jean-Efflam Bavouzet

Jean-Efflam Bavouzet couples the Grand Sonata in C major with less well-known works: two very early sonatas (Nos 3 and 4) provide a stark contrast to the later works (Nos 28 and 45). The album ends with the *Arietta con 12 Variazioni.*

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